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TELLING HER PEOPLE'S STORY: MAE TIMBIMBOO PARRY, MATRIARCH OF
THE NORTHWESTERN BAND OF THE SHOSHONE NATION, 1919-2007.

by

Dean McGuire

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

History

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2021

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ABSTRACT

Telling Her People's Story: Mae Timbimboo Parry, Matriarch of the Northwestern Band
of the Shoshone Nation, 1919-2007

by

Dean McGuire, Master of Science

Utah State University, 2021

Major Professor: Dr. Colleen O'Neill
Department: History

This thesis developed from over a year of conversations with Northwestern Shoshones and research at the Northwestern Shoshone Tribal Library. This project simply would not have been possible without key interlocutors Darren Parry and Patty Timbimboo Madsen. They often talked of Mae Timbimboo Parry's life-long efforts to change the popularly held designation of the Bear River "Battle" to the Bear River Massacre. During her long and incredibly active life, Mae Parry fought for Northwestern Band recognition and a better public understanding of the Bear River Massacre. Her life shows how Shoshone people's decisions and actions influenced the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the state of Utah, and the federal government in ways previously deemed impossible by the public and scholars alike.

(87 pages)

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

Telling Her People's Story: Mae Timbimboo Parry, Matriarch of the Northwestern Band
of the Shoshone Nation, 1919-2007

Dean McGuire

Mae Timbimboo Parry played a significant role in changing the public's narrative about the Bear River Massacre and shaping the current knowledge about Northwestern Shoshone history. According to Mae Parry, Northwestern Shoshones were not desperate victims of violence but rather Native Americans who adapted from a great tragedy and survived on their own terms. This thesis explores the meaning of her work for Northwestern Shoshones today.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my committee members, Dr. Colleen O'Neill, Dr. Seth Archer, and Dr. Lawrence Culver, for their guidance with this thesis and my career. I am indebted to Darren Parry, former Chairmen of the Tribal Council, and Patty Timbimboo Madsen, Cultural Coordinator and Resources Manager, for helping me realize this struggle and granting me access to their intimate historical collection and archives. The Northwestern Band of the Shoshone Nations Tribal Headquarters in Brigham City features a library which holds the tribe's physical archives and collection consisting of artifacts, interviews, and manuscripts. The tribe's archivist, Paula Watkins, has spent years cataloguing and digitizing the collection for the planned Interpretive Center at the Bear River Massacre site and Utah State University.

Dean McGuire

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INTRODUCTION

Mae T. Parry was the great granddaughter of Sagwitch Timbimboo, who was one of several chieftains of the Northwestern Shoshones during the Bear River Massacre, and afterward he led his people to new opportunities by moving to Washakie farm and leading the people's conversion to Mormonism. His son, Yeager Timbimboo, was a survivor of the massacre as well and moved his own family to Washakie in 1883. Eight years later he was President of the Washakie Ward Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association. Yeager's son, Moroni, heard stories about the Bear River Massacre from his father and grandfather Sagwitch. He served as first counselor in the bishopric, and he was the first Native American bishop in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Mae T. Parry, born in 1919, was Moroni Timbimboo's daughter, and she too heard stories from her grandfather Yeager about the massacre and the Northwestern Shoshone ways of life. At just twelve years old, she started writing these stories down and began a life-long path towards recording Northwestern Shoshone history and defending the Shoshone perspective of the Bear River Massacre.

Northwestern Shoshones endured Spanish expansion and consequently adopted an equestrian lifestyle in the eighteenth century to compete with Europeans and other new horse-riding American Indians such as the Ute and Crow.¹ However, Northwestern Shoshones faced an increasingly desperate problem that many American Indians faced

¹ Mae Timbimboo Parry, "The Northwestern Shoshone," in *A History of Utah's American Indians*, ed. Forrest Cuch, (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2003), 26; Refer to Scott R. Christensen's introduction in *Sagwitch: Shoshone Chieftain, Mormon Elder, 1822-1887*, (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1999), 1-10, for an expanded conversation about Northwestern Shoshone happenings before the nineteenth century, which is beyond the scope of this thesis.

during the mid-nineteenth century in the American West. Unlike previous visitors to their homelands over the years, Mormon people were there to stay. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints started settling lands in Cache Valley during 1855. As Mormon settlements expanded, the Shoshones were gradually pushed to the fringes of lands sacred to their ways of life and crucial for subsistence.²

And so, by the winter of 1863 the Northwestern Shoshone population had depleted significantly. Trivial quarrels between Northwestern Shoshones and Mormons over land use and cattle grazing culminated into the disproportionate slaughter and near annihilation of an entire group of people. On January 29, Lieutenant Colonel Patrick Connor's 3rd Army Regiment of California Volunteers massacred more than four hundred Northwestern Shoshone men, women, and children at Bear River near present-day Preston, Idaho.³

The Bear River Massacre all but guaranteed that Mormons would no longer be interrupted while settling lands previously occupied by Shoshones. The Shoshone survivors were blood-spattered, scattered across the land, and heartbroken over the loss of their loved ones. But they were alive and never forgot Bear River Massacre. Nor did they abandon their Shoshone identity. Invited by Mormon leaders, Northwestern Shoshone started moving to Brigham City's cooperative farm a few miles south of Portage, UT in

² Scott R. Christensen, *Sagwitch: Shoshone Chieftain, Mormon Elder, 1822-1887*, (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1999), 41-76.

³ Darren Parry, *The Bear River Massacre: A Shoshone History*, 37. Note that the number of Northwestern Shoshones killed is still disputed. There are no definitive studies written in the last twenty years that revisit death counts established decades ago and without collaboration from Northwestern Shoshones. Histories done outside the Northwestern Band tend to accept that 200 to 300 Northwestern Shoshones were killed, while Northwestern Shoshones have always asserted the number is higher than later reported. Hopefully, a fresh look at the tragic event through collaboration between Northwestern Shoshones and scholars soon will solve the issue.

1881. They renamed the farm Washakie in honor of the Eastern Shoshone Chief who many Shoshones considered the leader of all Shoshone. Northwestern Shoshone survivors and their descendants continued to share stories of that tragic day in January of 1863.

After relocating to Washakie, the Northwestern Band commenced the most meaningful period of regrouping and innovating their ways of life since the Bear River Massacre. Northwestern Shoshone made the farmstead their community over the next five decades, and during that time they ushered in generations of activists who increasingly demanded recognition as a sovereign Native Nation from the United States federal government.⁴ Mae Timbimboo Parry was among those Shoshone activists born at Washakie in the early twentieth century. During the 1960s, Parry joined the major historical struggle for gaining recognition that had been carried on by Northwestern Shoshone activists since the Bear River Massacre.⁵

The Northwestern Band was mostly ignored by the federal government after 1863 despite the signing of a treaty by both parties in the same year that guaranteed annuities and friendly relations. Another treaty signed by other Shoshone bands in 1868 at the Treaty of Fort Bridger excluded the Northwestern Band, and left Northwestern Shoshones in a paradox, where they were recognized as a sovereign entity within the greater Shoshone Nation in 1863 but not in 1868. In 1929, the Northwestern Band took this issue of recognition to the Court of Claims and initiated a decades-long struggle of articulating their identity as Northwestern Shoshones; the process was arduous for

⁴ Scott R. Christensen, *Sagwitch: Shoshone Chieftain, Mormon Elder, 1822-1887*, 163-165.

Shoshone activists and their legal counsels. Historian James C. Scott suggests that certain colonial states, such as the United States, are fundamentally driven to create a uniform society at the expense of people who do not conform to the standards established by the State.⁶ Further, Scott argues the enforcement of a distinct language is the most powerful tool for ensuring outsiders, Indigenous peoples in this context, remain on the fringes of society.⁷ This colonial principle meant that Native Americans who brought claims against the federal government (the State) in the twentieth century faced the dubious task of conveying their grievances in English standards of language and law.

The barriers Northwestern Shoshones faced when articulating their own case with the federal government are microcosms of Scott's observations regarding colonial power. Northwestern Shoshones had to *prove* their own existence within their ancestral homelands, which proved especially difficult for elders in 1929. But as a result, future generations of Shoshone activists became increasingly adept at navigating the federal bureaucracy and organizing themselves to strengthen their claims. A strong example of this change is a meeting that took place in 1967 at Bannock Creek, Idaho, where the Northwestern Band held a meeting, conversed in Shoshone, and voted to accept a settlement from the Indian Claims Commission. Mae T. Parry helped organize the meeting by sending out notices to members, recording details of the meeting, and traveling with her brother Frank Timbimboo to Washington, D.C. as a representative of the Northwestern Band during negotiations for the final settlement. Eleven years later in 1987, Northwestern Shoshones gained federal recognition and accepted the official title

⁶ James C. Scott, *Seeing Like A State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, (Yale University Press, 1999), 7.

⁷ James C. Scott, *Seeing Like A State*, 72.

of Northwestern Band of the Shoshone Nation.⁸ Mae T. Parry was directly involved in Northwestern Band politics for over two decades and contributed to the process of making Shoshone claims visible to the State.

Mae Parry proved equally adept at making Shoshone perspectives about the Bear River Massacre visible to the white public as she did with the Shoshone lands claim case and the federal government. Mae Parry's "Massacre at Boa Ogoi" published in 1976 expressed in written form what Northwestern Shoshones had been sharing among themselves and to whites who would listen since the Bear River Massacre occurred in 1863. Parry's article was embraced by contemporary scholars as a major turning point for recasting the Bear River "battle" to a massacre.⁹

She dedicated her life to Northwestern Shoshone culture beyond changing perspectives about the Bear River Massacre as well. Perhaps the best written account of the Northwestern Shoshone history from before the Bear River Massacre through the 1990s was done, not coincidentally, by Mae Parry.¹⁰ Her work is still exceptional as most work about the Northwestern Shoshones focuses on the Bear River Massacre or the lives

⁸ With this history in mind, I use the most recognized titles, Northwestern Shoshone and Northwestern Band, to represent the collective of Shoshones who survived the Bear River Massacre and relocated to Washakie in the 1880s. I go back and forth between those two titles for style and clarity. Further, I use the Northwestern Shoshones denote the collective members of Northwestern Shoshone, as in Americans for the United States of America. A full-length book done through collaboration between the NWBSN and specialized linguists is needed to trace and define the term Newe. As an outside observer, I cannot assign a Newe identity to Northwestern Shoshone until there are more historical studies done that chronicle the continuation of Newe culture from contact with Europeans into the present day. Northwestern-Shoshone members have used Newe to describe themselves exclusively, and I am not qualified to be the first non-Shoshone to use the term Newe with specific reference to the Northwestern Shoshone. See Gregory Smoak's *Ghost Dances and Identity: Prophetic Religion and American Indian Ethnogenies in the Nineteenth Century* for his discussion on the emergence of a distinct Shoshone identity in the late 1800s.

⁹ Brigham D. Madsen, *The Shoshoni Frontier and the Bear River Massacre*, (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1985), Madsen includes Parry's "Massacre at Boa Ogoi" in Appendix B, 231-238.

¹⁰ Mae Timbimboo Parry, "The Northwestern Shoshone," 25-72.

of a few influential members of the Northwestern Shoshone who survived the massacre or lived during years soon after the founding of Washakie in 1881. Parry took on the arts and crafts traditions practiced by her mother Amy Timbimboo, and she used the materials she produced to educate white people about Shoshone culture. Mae Parry, her sister Hazel Timbimboo Zundel, and Amy Timbimboo have Shoshone crafts in the Utah State Folk Arts Collection.

Mae Parry shaped the legacy of the Northwestern Band as an activist, historian, and artist. Throughout her life, she “turned the power,” of state, church, and federal authorities by preserving her people’s history, culture, and memory. In chapter one, I frame Mae Timbimboo’s experience in boarding school during the late 1920s through the phrase “turning the power” to show how Mae maintained her Northwestern Shoshone identity, despite the assimilationist agenda at Sherman Institute in Riverside, California. Mae came back from Sherman more independent and resolved to helping her people. In chapter two, scholarship on recognition and self-determination frames a discussion of Northwestern Shoshone political developments from the 1940s through the 1980s. The Northwestern Band successfully navigated struggles against external forces and gained federal recognition as the Northwestern Band of the Shoshone Nation (NWBSN) in 1987. Chapter three centers entirely on Mae Parry’s cultural activism in the final quarter of the twentieth century, when she worked towards reclaiming the Bear River Massacre as a Northwestern Shoshone story, participated in several interviews, and practiced beadwork taught to her by her mother, Amy Timbimboo. I consult secondary works on cultural production and placemaking to explain the significance of these activities for continuing Northwestern Shoshone traditions.

It seemed inappropriate to mix Mae Parry's activism within chapters and risk potentially undermining both her political and cultural activism; I hope to avoid this issue by addressing each form of her activism in its own chapter. Further, I consider this arrangement the most faithful to Mae Parry's life, as I understand it, drawn from conversations with her descendants, members of the Northwestern Band, and archival research.

Historiography

This thesis is a study of Native-American activism. Each chapter shows Mae Timbimboo Parry and other Northwestern Shoshones organizing themselves and actively engaging with public officials to better the Northwestern Band's position in society. In recent years, scholars have gone further to place American Indian perspectives at the center of history of the West and North America, which again challenged the traditional "civilizing" view of indigenous history by showing how native power influenced European and American nations.¹¹ Native Americans adapted to an ever-changing environment by consistently forging new alliances, trade systems, territories, and tools. They grappled with fundamental political, social, and economic issues, but American Indians often worked through these experiences in ways that were unfamiliar and until recently invisible to Europeans and Americans. Native Americans' abilities to confront the challenges of settler colonialism did not stop in the nineteenth century, and activists

¹¹ Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 2008. In the introduction, Hämäläinen provides a historiographical discussion of power and agency in Native American scholarship.

in the twentieth century found new adaptations for surviving that carried on the legacies of their ancestors.

American Indian activists in the twentieth century and their connection to the struggles of previous generations over settler colonialism has long been overlooked by historians, and so, the understanding between the two groups is often separated.

American Indians in the nineteenth century and their struggles seem entirely disconnected from the efforts of American Indian activists in the twentieth century, and vice versa. However, scholars of a “New Indian History” suggests a method that bridges together American Indians’ generational struggles and highlights the ways indigenous peoples carried on the practice of adapting to changing circumstances.¹²

What does “New Indian History” mean for Northwestern Shoshone history? The existing scholarship ultimately influenced my decision to focus on Mae Timbimboo Parry because I realized not much had been written about how Northwestern Shoshone activists influenced history, let alone in the twentieth century. It seems like this lack of attention to Northwestern Shoshone activists bothered Mae Parry as well; she wrote, “leaders of the Northwestern Band who were engaged in getting restitution from the United States government included many others, none of whom lived to see the fruits of their labors.”¹³ She was clearly calling out for those leaders to be recognized for their efforts, which has eluded the focus of historians for the most part.

¹² Frederick Hoxie, *This Indian Country: American Indian Activists and the Place They Made* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012), 4-5; Kenneth R. Philp, *Termination Revisited: American Indians on the Trail to Self-Determination, 1933-1953* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press), xiii.

¹³ Mae Timbimboo Parry, “The Northwestern Shoshone,” 71.

What little scholarship there is about Northwestern Band activism predominantly comes from two biographies about Northwestern Shoshones who survived the Bear River Massacre or their children. The first, Scott Christensen's *Sagwitch: Shoshone Chieftan, Mormon Elder, 1822-1887*, tells the story of Sagwitch's conversion to Mormonism after the Bear River Massacre and his leadership during the Northwestern Band's move to Washakie in 1881. Although mainly focusing on Sagwitch's life, Christensen adds an important perspective to Northwestern Shoshone History by showing how they survived and carried on their ways of life after the massacre. The second, Matthew Kreitzer's *The Washakie Letters of Willie Ottogary: Northwestern Shoshone Journalist and Leader, 1906-1929*, seemingly serves as a follow up to *Sagwitch*. Willie Ottogary wrote four hundred and fifty letters and published articles in five newspapers, including Logan's *The Journal*.¹⁴ In these letters, Ottogary wrote about everyday happenings at Washakie including weather conditions and crop yields, but he also detailed more serious matters such as the poor conditions and health of Northwestern Shoshones who were rapidly forced into a lifestyle contrary to their own. As editor, Kreitzer provides the historical context for Ottogary's letters, and he clears up any language in Ottogary's letters which is difficult for the average American to understand.

Together, these books bring to light Northwestern Shoshones individual struggles and the tough decisions they had to make because of the Bear River Massacre and increasing white settlement on their homelands. While these works are crucial, it is obvious that a large gap exists in the scholarship about Northwestern Band history in the

¹⁴ Matthew E Kreitzer, ed., *The Washakie Letters of Willie Ottogary, Northwestern Shoshone Journalist and Leader, 1906-1919*, (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2000), 5, 19.

twentieth century and Northwestern Shoshones who carried on their ancestors' legacies. Mae Timbimboo Parry intensely advocated for Northwestern Shoshone sovereignty and contributed information about them and the Bear River Massacre to the academic community, yet no substantial writing exists about her or other Northwestern Shoshones whose activism during this time in the later twentieth century innovated the Northwestern Shoshone.

The Bear River Massacre started receiving greater attention from both scholars and the public in the 1970s and 1980s. It was during this period when the settler-favored Bear River "Battle" narrative shifted towards the Northwestern Shoshone perspective of the Bear River "Massacre," which accurately portrayed the merciless killings of their people. Consequently, the Bear River Massacre—the subsequent commemorations, and the Northwestern Shoshones' efforts to preserve their memory of the massacre has received more attention from scholars than any other topic related to Northwestern Shoshone history. Published in 1985, Madsen's *The Shoshoni Frontier and the Bear River Massacre* is regarded as the first, conclusive monograph to accurately shape the narrative of bloodshed of that day as a massacre. His overall description of the massacre scene is thorough and moves towards a better representation of the Shoshone perspective by showing how the "battle" quickly turned into outright slaughter.

Memory studies of the Bear River Massacre materialized in the early 2000s. Historian John Barnes explores the construction of numerous monuments around the massacre site over time, and his research extends from Franklin County's "battle" marker built in 1932 to the Northwestern Band's own monument in 2006. In a short but well-researched article, Barnes analyzes each monument and how it reflects a general shifting

of public opinion between Northwestern Shoshone and settler-favored perspectives. His conclusions suggest that the Northwestern Shoshones were successful in preserving their memory of the Bear River Massacre, and their determinations are shifting the narrative in their favor.¹⁵ However, Barnes expresses concern for the general lack of scholarship about the Northwestern Band, and his worries are not baseless.

Northwestern Shoshone history has been directed by the events of one tragic day. As Darren Parry stresses, “we are not a thing of the past.”¹⁶ Shoshones today largely influenced my decision to cover the Bear River Massacre through Mae Timbimboo Parry’s activism—rather than using the Bear River Massacre as a pivot point for Parry’s efforts. In doing so, I hope the Bear River Massacre remains important but does not overshadow other aspects of her twentieth century activism.

Decolonizing Northwestern Shoshone History

Shoshone leaders are frustrated with scholars who discount the use of oral history as a valid historical source. Darren Parry remembers “that none of the stories that my grandmother told me were in the history books.”¹⁷ I argue that this stereotype is entirely incorrect and merely an example of how American ideals of modernity *attempt* to discount American Indians. The Shoshone memory of the Bear River Massacre has always been among us, and members of the Northwestern Band took great care over many years to preserve and enrich their history. However, the Northwestern Shoshone

¹⁵ John Barnes, “The Struggle to Control the Past: Commemoration, Memory, and the Bear River Massacre of 1863.” *The Public Historian* 30, no. 1 (February 2008), 103.

¹⁶ Darren Parry, *The Bear River Massacre: A Shoshone History*, 98.

¹⁷ Darren Parry, *The Bear River Massacre: A Shoshone History*, 6-8.

perspective and ways of life were intentionally and less often unintentionally, subverted by local whites, Utah and Idaho policymakers, and the federal government.

The white public denied attention to Shoshone memory of the massacre at Bear River because many Americans didn't know who the Northwestern Shoshone were or their historical struggle. For those reasons, I believe it best to center this research project around the materials collected by the Northwestern Band. Many historians approach the subject of how American Indians preserve their culture, but often scholars rely on information from collections outside the tribe. By predominantly using sources gathered by the Northwestern Band, this project will directly show how the Northwestern Shoshone protected their memory of the massacre and sustained their culture despite years of oppression by external American powers.

Darren Parry, Mae Parry's grandson, spoke on two panels at the 2019 Western History Association Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada.¹⁸ He stressed that the Bear River Massacre was a tragic event in Northwestern Shoshone history, but his people survived and built the Northwestern Band of the Shoshone Nation as we know today. He suggested that the Northwestern Band reclaiming the Bear River Massacre narrative went hand in hand with Northwestern Shoshone political, economic, and cultural expansion in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries; Northwestern Shoshone activists and leaders worked towards recognition, self-determination, and sovereignty while telling their story

¹⁸ Darren Parry, "Voices from the Dust: A Shoshone Perspective of the Bear River Massacre," *Landscapes of Violence and Sacredness: Native Reclaiming and Reinterpretation of Historic and Hallowed Spaces*, Conference Room 14, October 18, 2019, Westgate Las Vegas Resort & Casino; Darren Parry, "What Sagwitch's Conversion Means to My People," *"Like Fire in the Dry Grass": From the Salmon River Mission Failure of the 1850s to the Northwestern Shoshone Conversions of the 1870s*, Conference Room 3, October 19, 2019, Westgate Las Vegas Resort & Casino.

of the Bear River Massacre—just as Parry was doing in his role as Chairman of the Northwestern Band in 2019.

Mae Parry was arguably the most influential person among those Northwestern Shoshone activists because of her equally powerful contributions to Shoshone politics and identity. Indigenist studies scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith describes the process “by which Indigenous knowledges are generated,” meaning the methods and structures Native people use to create understandings of themselves, others, and the environment.¹⁹ Mae Parry held a deep understanding about generating knowledge for contemporary and future generations of Northwestern Shoshones; consequently, the Northwestern Tribal Library and Archive (NWBSTLA), constructed from the early 2000s to 2020, is conceivably her greatest legacy to the Northwestern Band. The NWBSTLA clearly shows how the Northwestern Shoshones have generated knowledges over the last two centuries and Mae Parry’s significance for that process.

Mae Parry’s document collection in the archive contains digital copies of her original writings, which date as far back as 1929 during her time at Sherman Institute, and the stories and photos she collected from Northwestern Shoshone elders who lived before the turn of the twentieth century.²⁰ The collection paints a vivid picture of Mae Parry’s life and where she sits in Northwestern Shoshone history. The Shoshone perspective is garnering attention from Utahns, Idahoans, and Americans in new and meaningful ways, and this is because of the Northwestern Band’s efforts to preserve its

¹⁹ Margaret Kovach, *Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 13.

²⁰ Inventory of MS 66, Mae Timbimboo Parry Documents—Collection 8, MS 66, Northwestern Band of Shoshone Tribal Library.

culture and history. Mae Parry's activism and storytelling brought attention to the massacre and strengthened collective Northwestern Shoshones identity. "Telling Her People's Story" is about the Bear River Massacre, Mae Parry's efforts, and Northwestern Band communal actions in the twentieth century. Those happenings created today's Northwestern Band of the Shoshone Nation.

CHAPTER ONE

Hope for the Future:

Mae Timbimboo “Turns the Power,” and the Northwestern Band Makes its Claim

“All the time he [Yeager Timbimboo] was telling all of his grandchildren [to remember stories]. But I stuck to it.”²¹

-Mae Timbimboo Parry, 2006

During an interview in 1985, Kathy Bradford asked Mae Timbimboo Parry if it had been difficult for her to adjust to life back in Washakie after attending an Indian boarding school in California. Parry said: “No, not for me. Like I said, I am just different – a free spirit, I suppose. I just adjust very well because I almost live in two different worlds. I take the best from both, and it’s very, very interesting.”²² In Mae Parry’s experience, Indigenous people and white people in the United States lived different realities. Her easy movement between those worlds is a testament to her diplomatic talents. She embraced what she learned in boarding schools but remained devoted to record Northwestern Shoshone history. She saw value in her people’s knowledge, and she didn’t want their stories to disappear in a world where Shoshone didn’t make the rules.

Mae Parry adapted to changing circumstances and made her own way by carefully navigating between the two worlds as Northwestern Shoshones had done for over two centuries since confronting European colonization. She was not alone. She and a small group of American Indians were part of a national wave of early 20th century activists

²¹ Mae Timbimboo Parry, interview by Michele Welch, transcript. Clearfield, UT, May 26, 2006. MS 182 Folder 1. Northwestern Band of Shoshone Tribal Library, 18.

²² Mae Timbimboo Parry, interview by Kathy Bradford, transcript. Clearfield, UT, December 5, 1985. MS 103. Northwestern Band of Shoshone Tribal Library, 1-2.

claiming lands previously seized by the United States. While she was away at school, the next generation of Northwestern Shoshone leaders initiated a new phase of activism both within the tribe and the greater United States. On March 28, 1929, they officially filed a petition with the federal government.

The Northwestern Shoshones never ceded their land to the federal government. In the 1863 Treaty of Box Elder, which established them as "Treaty Indians," the U.S. government promised to uphold friendly relations with the Northwestern Band of Shoshones as a sovereign nation. But that friendship did not last long. Five years later, negotiations of the 1868 Fort Bridger treaty proceeded without input from Chief Sagwitch. He was recovering from a gunshot wound and could not attend the meetings. Without Sagwitch, there was no one there to argue on behalf of the Northwestern Shoshones. The government essentially wrote them out of existence in the 1868 Treaty by failing to mention the tribe by name. In an effort to rectify that problem, the Northwestern Band filed a petition with the Court of Claims in 1929. They wanted the federal government to formally recognize their treaty rights to reclaim their ancestral lands. In a split decision the Supreme Court in 1945 affirmed the Court of Claims' 1942 opinion that the Northwestern Shoshones were not federally entitled to lands or annuities from the 1863 Box Elder Treaty. Undeterred, Northwestern Shoshones resubmitted their claim with the Indian Claims Commission in 1946 and launched a new phase of activism in which Mae Timbimboo Parry would play a crucial role. In 1928, young Mae Timbimboo could not imagine how her efforts to save her peoples' history would eventually rebuild Northwestern Shoshone sovereignty. When she left home, Mae embarked on a journey where she found her voice.

Mae Timbimboo at Sherman Institute

In September 1928 Moroni and Amy Timbimboo loaded their daughters Joan, Hazel, and Mae in the car and began the long journey to Riverside, California.²³ Seven years older than Mae, Joan was the first Timbimboo child to go to an Indian Boarding School the year before, and the family's trip to Chemawa in Salem, Oregon, left a lasting and positive impression on Mae. She later recalled that the trip gave her a sense of knowing and adventure that other Shoshones could not experience at Washakie. She was captivated by the green forests and mountains that dominate the Pacific Northwest's landscape, in contrast to the arid environment in Box Elder County, Utah. Mae grew up surrounded by sage brush and dry land, and the family's trip to Chemawa sparked her desire to travel. After Joan returned from Chemawa Moroni and Amy Timbimboo decided to enroll both of their elder daughters in the Sherman Institute in Riverside, California. They intended on leaving sixteen-year-old Joanne and fourteen-year-old Hazel there and bringing Mae back to Washakie, but Mae had other plans.

At nine-years old, Mae Timbimboo was already independently minded. She knew what she wanted and did what she thought was best to achieve her goals. When the family dropped off Hazel and Joan, Mae turned to her father and asked, "Can I stay here too?" Moroni Timimboo made arrangements with the superintendent, and Mae enrolled as a third-grade student at Sherman Institute, where she stayed for the next three years. Not everyone from Washakie and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was happy about Moroni and Amy Timimboo's decision to enroll the girls in school so far

²³Matthew Kreitzer, ed., *The Washakie Letters of Willie Ottogary*, 228-229, 279.

from home. Mae remembered that Bishop Ward came to their house and warned her father, “You are sending your girls away to the devil.”²⁴ The tension between Moroni and the bishop is typical of the association between the Northwestern Band and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Northwestern Shoshones embraced Mormonism, but they were going to do what they thought was best for their children and the long-term survival of their people even if those choices did not always align with Mormon teachings or the desire of church leaders.

Not that survival was on Mae Timbimboo’s mind. She was interested in California for the same reasons that draw all children to new places. She thought Sherman Institute was beautiful, and the sight and smell of magnolia trees drew her in. There was also a deeper and more practical reason for Mae’s choice to spend three years at Sherman. Courtesy of oldest sister Joan, Mae knew what to expect from boarding school, and she believed Joan “learned more” during her year-long stay at Chemawa.²⁵ By staying at the boarding school, Mae showed a perception of the “two worlds” that far exceeded the expectations of her peers. At an incredibly young age, she recognized that the more she knew about the white world, the better she would be equipped to survive in it. Mae Timbimboo’s time at Sherman Institute planted the seeds for “turning the power” by using her “white” education to stand up for the rights of Northwestern Shoshones.

“Turning the power” refers to the ways Native Americans retained their culture and identity at boarding schools.²⁶ Recent studies of Native students in boarding schools

²⁴ Mae Timbimboo Parry, interview with Kathy Bradford, 6.

²⁵ Mae Timbimboo Parry, interview by Michele Welch, 6.

²⁶ Clifford E. Trafzer, Jean A. Keller, and Lorene Sisquoc, eds., *Boarding School Blues: Revisiting American Indian Educational Experiences* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 2; “Turning the power is a Native American phrase meaning to send negative power back to its source, using the powers to effectuate a positive outcome for Indian people. In this case, over time, American Indian students, parents,

during the nineteenth and twentieth century have uncovered the various and effective measures these students took to combat assimilative policies.²⁷ Historians of Sherman Institute, Clifford E. Trafzer, Jean A. Keller, and Lorene Sisquoc suggest that Indigenous students “used the potentially negative experiences to produce a positive result—the preservation of Indian identity, cultures, communities, languages, and peoples.”²⁸ Applied broadly, turning the power involves a wide range of resistance methods from students running away from school to silently praying in their own language. The crucial aspect of the term is that students used education to their advantage.

Sherman Institute administrators wanted exactly the opposite results. Indian boarding schools were created with the express intent of erasing Indigenous students’ cultural heritage. The schools gave Indigenous students the opportunity for an education in basic subjects such as arithmetic and geography as well as domestic work and agriculture to help them live and work in twentieth-century America. But those opportunities arose from boarding school officials’ low expectations for Native people when they eventually left the school. In his study of labor at Sherman Institute, historian Kevin Whalen suggests that academic courses and student work “stood as part of a broader curricular effort to prepare students at Sherman for jobs to work at the bottom of

and community leaders learned from the boarding school experience and used their knowledge to the benefit of their people,” 29.

²⁷ Brenda J. Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press); David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1995); Clifford E. Trafzer, Jean A. Keller, and Lorene Sisquoc, eds., *Boarding School Blues*; Kevin Whalen, *Native Students at Work: American Indian Labor and Sherman Institute’s Outing Program, 1900-1945* (Seattle: University of Washington Press), 2016.

²⁸ Clifford E. Trafzer, Jean A. Keller, and Loren Sisquoc, eds., *Boarding School Blues*, 1.

an industrializing economy.”²⁹ Administrators imagined an American society where former Native students used their boarding school education to engage in domestic or manual labor (for whites), which would sever Indian people’s ties to their families and culture. However, as the term “turning the power” suggests, the boarding school system ultimately failed in its attempt to erase the “Indian” from students, and like others, Mae Timbimboo found ways to turn the experience to her benefit.

When Mae Timbimboo arrived in the fall of 1928, Sherman Institute was already steeped in a deep history of assimilative education. Sherman Institute was actually the second boarding school to open in the area, with Perris Indian School officially enrolling eight Native students in 1892. Twenty years later, nearly all of the 350 students from Perris Indian School were transferred to Sherman when it opened its doors.³⁰ The boarding school developed a curriculum involving academics (math, English, geography), practical learning, and labor for which students were not always compensated.

Students were restricted in their movements and punished in insidious ways for not fulfilling tasks. Officials withheld food, or locked truant students in cells and openly discouraged students from going home or seeing loved ones; sometimes even denying such visits altogether.³¹ In other words, Sherman Institute looked and functioned like an

²⁹ Kevin Whalen, *Native Students at Work: American Indian Labor and Sherman Institute’s Outing Program, 1900-1945* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016), 4.

³⁰ Clifford E. Trafzer and Leleua Loupe, “Chapter 1: Form Perris Indian School to Sherman Institute,” in *The Indian School on Magnolia Avenue: Voices and Images from Sherman Institute*, Clifford E. Trafzer, Matthew Sakiestewa Gilbert, and Lorene Sisquoc, eds., (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2012), 21.

³¹ Clifford E. Trafzer and Leleua Loupe, “Chapter 1: Form Perris Indian School to Sherman Institute,” 25-26.

American prison for Indigenous children in the early twentieth century. But Mae had different ideas—she saw opportunities where she could take advantage of the boarding school system.

Except Mae Timbimboo didn't enter Sherman that day; instead, *May* Timbimboo did.³² For whatever reason, officials alternated typing her name as "May" or "Mae" in official documents. For example, her case record lists her name as "Mae Timbimboo," but her attendance record says "May Timbimboo."³³ Perhaps the official wanted her name to conform to Anglo-American language standards, but then it makes little sense that some documents list her as Mae Timbimboo. It seems most likely that whoever recorded Mae's name made a mistake, and the error stuck in inconsistent ways. Mistaken identity markers seem typical for administrators at Sherman as well. They wrote Mae's religious affiliation as "Protestant," and there are a few possibilities as to why she wasn't indicated as belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.³⁴ The first has little to do with Sherman but instead involves her relationship with Mormonism. She might have felt disillusioned about her religious affiliation at the time because of the stories she heard from Shoshone elders about the Bear River Massacre. Another reason might be that she wasn't given an option for "Mormon" with "Protestant" being the closest selection.³⁵ Based on the identification issues for Mae Timbimboo's case file, it seems that Sherman

³² Record of Pupil, May Timbimboo, National Archives and Records Administration: National Archives at Riverside, Record Group 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Sherman Indian High School, Student Case Files, 1902-1980, Box Number 356.

³³ Case Record and Attendance Record, May Timbimboo, National Archives at Riverside, Sherman Indian High School, Student Case Files, 1902-1980, Box Number 356.

³⁴ Case Record, May Timbimboo, National Archives at Riverside, Sherman Indian High School, Student Case Files, 1902-1980, Box Number 356.

³⁵ Dr. Patrick Mason, email message to author, November 5, 2020.

Institute officials didn't pay close attention to the identities that students brought with them. After all, administrators' focuses were on changing the students' identities once they got to the boarding school. This identity erasure was on a physical level as well. When students arrived at Sherman, they were ordered to take off their clothing for a physical examination, and their clothes were replaced with military-style uniforms.³⁶

By the time of Mae's enrollment in 1928, Sherman administrators initiated a campaign to ensure student health as a result of prior boarding schools' reputations for death and disease.³⁷ Specifically relating to student health at Sherman, historian Jean A. Keller found a case in 1913 where students with enlarged tonsils needed operations but Sherman Institute hospital did not have surgical equipment.³⁸ It is possible this supply issue was resolved by the time Mae Timbimboo went to school, but there is not enough written on the subject to make a reasonable conclusion.³⁹ Mae remained relatively healthy, despite the difficult conditions including limited availability to health care.

Mae excelled in her studies at the boarding school, and her best subjects were writing and drawing. She improved in writing and drawing every year—a sign of her future success as secretary and record keeper for the Northwestern Band. The most frustrating error in her case file is that she is listed as attending Sherman for three years from second to fourth grade in some records but from third to fifth grade in others.⁴⁰ And

³⁶ Clifford E. Trafzer and Leleua Loupe, "Chapter 1: From Perris Indian School to Sherman Institute," 25.

³⁷ Jean A. Keller, *Empty Beds: Indian Student Health at Sherman Institute*, (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press), 12.

³⁸ Jean A. Keller, *Empty Beds: Indian Student Health at Sherman Institute*, 87.

³⁹ Clifford E. Trafzer Matthew Sakiestewa Gilbert, and Lorene Sisquoc, "Introduction: The Indian School on Magnolia Avenue," in *The Indian School on Magnolia Avenue*, 9.

⁴⁰ Record of Pupil, May Timbimboo, National Archives at Riverside, Sherman Indian High School, Student Case Files, 1902-1980, Record Group 75, Box Number 356.

like the other mistakes in her case file, there is no consistency to the inaccuracies. It is difficult to understand how a student could be reported to be in the second grade in 1928 and then in the fifth in 1930 unless she skipped a grade, which is relayed nowhere in her file.⁴¹ Regardless, her development suggests not only that she was getting better at writing and drawing, but she had a passion for these subjects as well. Of course, her early success in writing and drawing had major consequences for the rest of her life. Ultimately the skills she developed at Sherman in writing especially would be used to preserve the stories of her people. Mae was clearly concerned about her grades. In the last letter she sent home to her parents on March 29, 1929, a ten-year old Mae wrote:

Father and mother,

This will be my last home letter to you this year. For we have only a few more weeks of school. We have tried to do our best and [enjoy] the many things we always have here at Sherman. The gardens are growing fine and we go down every week to hoe them and pull weeds. We have a new victrola for our room and music teacher is going to get us some records for it soon. We had a herd of cows so we are having plenty of fresh milk every day. I am well and happy. And I hope my report card will show that I am doing well in my schoolwork.⁴²

The “new victrola” represents the opportunities students recognized in Sherman Institute. On a wide scale, Indian students embraced or rejected school policies based on their individual situations. Mae embraced Sherman, for the most part, because she thought it would best serve her and, later, her people. Further, Mae’s letter reveals the paradox that existed at Sherman. It was a place where students enjoyed access to music

⁴¹ Case Summary (Green sheet), May Timbimboo, National Archives at Riverside, Sherman Indian High School, Student Case Files, 1902-1980, Record Group 75, Box Number 356.

⁴² Mae Timbimboo, letter to parents from Sherman Institute, March 29, 1929, MS 66, Mae Timbimboo Parry Documents- Collection 8, Folder 1: Pre-1900, Northwestern Band of Shoshone Tribal Library, Folder 3: 1920-1939, valediction intelligible.

programs and instruments but also pulled weeds at no cost to the school. That paradox marked Sherman and other Indian boarding schools as especially penal in nature. Students were essentially an unpaid labor force that “contributed substantially to the successful running of the school.”⁴³ Few, if any American schools in this era coerced the labor of white students in exchange for their education. But Native students used Sherman Institute’s outing program to garner money for themselves and combat the isolated nature of the boarding school.

Sherman Institute’s outing program sent students to work for local white employers both on a year-round and seasonal basis. Young men worked on farms and ranches, and young women performed domestic work for wealthy families. Sherman administrators believed that exposing young Indigenous people to American society and the industrialized economy would further separate Indian students from their Native identities.⁴⁴ As with on-campus activities, the students turned the outing program towards their advantage, and “learned to navigate the outing system... in order to forge and creative and deeply modern pathways into the second half of the twentieth century.”⁴⁵ American Indians used their experiences from outing programs to serve their own economic purposes. However, evidence has not been uncovered that implies Mae was placed in the outing program, but a letter Mae wrote during her third and final year at Sherman suggests that perhaps her older sister Joan was sent to Los Angeles as part of the program. During her third and final year at boarding school in 1931, Mae wrote:

Dearest father,

⁴³ Clifford E. Trafzer and Leleua Loupe, “Chapter 1: From Perris Indian School to Sherman Institute,” 22.

⁴⁴ Kevin Whalen, *Native Students at Work*, 32-42.

⁴⁵ Kevin Whalen, *Native Students at Work*, 9.

This is our last home letters we are writing. And I hope you will see what I have been doing all this year when you see my report card. I hope I pass to the fifth grade. I just got through with my examinations in geography. I think this was our last examination I hope, so I want to know if I passed or not. Aunt Ivy is here in Sherman working in the laundry. Joan told me she was going to Los Angeles next Saturday and wondered when I am going home. How is all the people getting along at old Washakie? That is all I am going to ask. Answer soon please.⁴⁶

In 1932, Sherman Institute's outing program sent thirty-nine women to work in or around Los Angeles, and the students were placed with employers at the end of classes in May.⁴⁷ It is likely Joan was sent to Los Angeles for the outing program, but even if she was not, her trip to Los Angeles is significant because it demonstrates how Sherman Institute "became a sort of migratory hub for many students and their communities."⁴⁸ In a program that was designed to assimilate them into the American economic system by erasing their "Indianness," Indigenous peoples actually expanded their communication networks with other American Indians.

Mae's primary considerations in the letter, grades and Washakie, did not particularly align with what Sherman administrators intended would be important for Indian students when they left the boarding school. Obviously, teachers and officials thought getting good grades was crucial for student success, but they imagined the new habits and education students received at Sherman would drive Indigenous pupils away from their former lives to "assimilate" into American society. Mae seems to be showing

⁴⁶ Mae Timbimboo, letter to parents from Sherman Institute, May 19, 1931, MS 66, Mae Timbimboo Parry Documents- Collection 8, Folder 1: Pre-1900, Northwestern Band of Shoshone Tribal Library, Folder 3: 1920-1939, valediction cut off from scanned document.

⁴⁷ Kevin Whalen, *Native Students at Work*, 40.

⁴⁸ Kevin Whalen, *Native Students at Work*, 14.

the opposite attitude in this letter; her final thoughts turn towards Washakie. She “turned the power” at Sherman by rejecting the notion that her boarding-school education would diminish her Northwestern Shoshone identity. Mae Parry later recalled how she and her sisters felt after the boarding schools: “We were no longer threatened with going to the devil. We were free-thinking students and did as we please. We were not afraid to stand up for our rights.”⁴⁹ If anything, Mae’s experiences at Sherman strengthened her resolve to preserve her peoples’ stories.

Mae Timbimboo’s experiences are not necessarily representative of those who attended Sherman or any other boarding school for that matter. Her life before Sherman and the choices she made there defined her individual experiences and perceptions; a quality that all Indigenous students who attended boarding schools in the early twentieth century shared. What is striking about Mae Parry’s recollections of Sherman, and the opportunities she found there, is that she readily recognized the advantages she had going into boarding school. Years later, Mae Parry explained, “I guess being an Indian and being the daughter of the first Lamanite Bishop (Moroni Timbimboo) in the church, we had opportunities that other people did not have.”⁵⁰ Above all, Mae Parry’s words are a reminder that her understandings of the world around her are not representative of all Northwestern Shoshone peoples, but her determination to ensure that her peoples’ stories are told on their terms is an aspiration every Shoshone shares in their own way.

Turning the Power of the Courts: Northwestern Shoshone v United States

⁴⁹ Mae Timbimboo Parry, interview with Kathy Bradford, 7.

⁵⁰ Mae Timbimboo Parry, interview with Kathy Bradford, 13.

Northwestern Shoshones spent nearly four decades resolving their claims brought against the United States in 1929. Protracting the case over such a large period of time had little to do with Shoshone actions. Northwestern Shoshones fully cooperated with the federal government and went through all of the proper legal channels. In 1926 they hired attorneys Charles E. Merrilat and Charles E. Kappler, who filed the petition three years later.⁵¹ Thus, began a process where Shoshones and their attorneys clearly stated their positions and provided ample testimonies and written evidence. The petition filed by Merrilat on behalf of the Northwestern Band laid out a suit amounting to \$15,070,000 “for damages for the taking of its lands without compensation.”⁵² To reach this amount, the Northwestern Band traced out wrongdoings by the United States and its citizens since the cession of Mexican Territory with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, wrongdoings that had been disregarded by the Court of Claims and its agents.

The United States’ transgressions against the Northwestern Shoshones came in two forms: unlawful dispossession of Shoshone lands and unfair compensation (in the form of annuities) for the taking of those lands. According to members, their territory extended from “the Bear River and Porteneuf mountain country along the Snake River on the north and to the country of the Great Salt Lake on the south and westwards to the mountain near the boundary between Utah and Nevada wherein lie the headwaters of the Raft River and Goose Creek which flow into the Snake River.”⁵³ The area is consistent

⁵¹ Yeager Timbimboo, testimony for the Plaintiff, June 29, 1931, Page 5. Reports Decided for Plaintiffs of US Court of Claims Case No M-107. The Northwestern Band or Tribe of Shoshone Indians and the Individual Members Thereof vs. United States of America. 1942. MS 176 Folder 1. Northwestern Band of Shoshone Tribal Library.

⁵² Yeager Timbimboo, testimony for the Plaintiff, June 29, 1931, 28-29.

⁵³ Yeager Timbimboo, testimony for the Plaintiff, June 29, 1931, 6.

with the boundaries laid out in the 1863 Treaty of Box Elder, where the Senate recognized Chief Pocatello's territory as "bounded west by the Raft River and on the east by the Profentuer Mountains."⁵⁴ The Senators, completely ignorant of Shoshone politics, did not realize Pocatello's claim included Sagwitch's smaller band as well.

However, the United States immediately failed in its promise of "friendly and amicable relations" with Northwestern Shoshones.⁵⁵ Settlers moved unchecked through Northwestern Shoshone territory in the years prior to and after the treaty was ratified, and the Northwestern Band never received the treaty's guaranteed annual appropriations of \$5,000 for twenty years. The issue of what happened to the annual stipend prompted a review by the Indian Claims Commission in 1968 when it ultimately decided Shoshone claims, but the issue of exactly how the appropriations were lost was not considered in the Court of Claims' 1942 decision or the Supreme Court's decision in 1945. Subtracting annuities given to them at the time of signing the Box Elder Treaty, the Northwestern Shoshones requested in 1931 a sum of \$70,000 for the United States' failure to pay the annual appropriations.

The Northwestern Band lost much more than what was guaranteed in 1863, though. The other \$15,000,000 that made up their suit referred to the monetary value of lands taken by the United States and turned into national forest reserves, which deprived them of their camps and crucial subsistence areas. These reserves included Cache National Forest, Minidoka National Forest, Caribou National Forest, Power County

⁵⁴ United States. Treaty with Northwestern Bands of Shoshonee Indians. July 30, 1863. *US Statutes at Large* 13 Stat. 69. Article IV.

⁵⁵ United States. Treaty with Northwestern Bands of Shoshonee Indians. July 30, 1863. *US Statutes at Large* 13 Stat. 69. Article I.

Game Preserve and the Oneida County State Game Preserve. The Northwestern Band of Shoshone estimated the reserves amounted to fourteen million acres in what is today Utah and Idaho. The land, for which they were never compensated, was clearly marked as Shoshone territory in 1863. Further, Northwestern Shoshones took issue with the creation of Fort Hall Indian Reservation on their homelands and counted it among their losses. Their grievances are telling of the geopolitical disruptions to Native communities caused by the United States and its citizens in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁵⁶

The United States officially filed Court of Claims Case M-107, *The Northwestern Band or Tribe of Shoshone Indians and the Individual Members Thereof vs. United States of America*, on March 28, 1931. Three months later, nineteen Northwestern Shoshones testified on behalf of their claims in Ogden, Utah, and Yeager Timbimboo (listed as Timimbo), son of Chief Sagwitch and grandfather to Mae Timbimboo Parry, was one of the nineteen members who gave a deposition. He was seventy-nine years old when he gave his testimony on June 29, 1931.⁵⁷

Besides his relation to Mae Parry, Yeager Timbimboo's testimony is important for a few, significant reasons. First, Timbimboo was one of the oldest members to testify, and his experiences stretched back to before the 1863 Bear River Massacre, which he barely survived by playing dead among the bodies of his fallen kin.⁵⁸ His testimony provided direct knowledge of the events and treaties disputed by the Northwestern Band's claims. Second, as Sagwitch Timbimboo's son, Yeager offered unique insights into Shoshone leadership. His father served as chief during the era of the contested

⁵⁶ Yeager Timbimboo, testimony for the Plaintiff, June 29, 1931, 26-27.

⁵⁷ Yeager Timbimboo, testimony for the Plaintiff, June 29, 1931, 32.

⁵⁸ Darren Parry, *The Bear River Massacre: A Shoshone History*, 46-47.

claims, from 1863-1887, after Bear Hunter was killed during the Massacre.⁵⁹ Above all though, Yeager Timbimboo's deposition reveals white Americans' lack of understanding about Shoshone government and subsistence practices. The questions asked by the Northwestern Band's lawyer during the proceedings often worked against the Northwestern Band's claims.

Perhaps the exact meaning of Yeager's deposition was lost in translation. But, misunderstandings between him and his attorney, Charles Merrilat, offer insights into why they may have lost the case. Early in the deposition, Merrilat asked Timbimboo about this father's relationship with the Northwestern Band of Shoshones. After Yeager Timbimboo explained that Sagwitch (Saquich) was from Nevada and traveled to northern Utah and southern Idaho. When Merrilat asked: "Was either he or his father ever adopted into the Northwestern Band?" Yeager Timbimboo responded, through a translator: "... at the time he lived was one of the leaders over his own men..., and his father was associated with the Northwestern Band at the time he lived, in a roaming life."⁶⁰ Yeager's answer was not the one Merrilat was looking for, but the question itself goes against how Northwestern Shoshone understood authority. While Sagwitch and his people were part of the Northwestern Band, several smaller groups (led by Sagwitch, Pocatello, Sanpitch, Little Soldier, and Bear Hunter) existed prior to the Bear River Massacre.⁶¹ Northwestern Shoshone leaders garnered authority from negotiations and alliances with other bands and among their own bands through consent. They did not consider one chieftain as a

⁵⁹ Gwen Timbimboo Davis, Updated file to NWBSN Chiefs and Chairman List from 1847 to 2019, not yet filed, Northwestern Band of Shoshone Tribal Library.

⁶⁰ Yeager Timbimboo, testimony for the Plaintiff, June 29, 1931, 33.

⁶¹ Scott R. Christensen, *Sagwitch: Shoshone Chieftain, Mormon Elder, 1822-1887*, 3.

unilateral authority figure. The attorney for the Shoshones was showing the same mindset that led government officials to think that Sagwitch's band was not party to the 1863 Treaty of Box Elder or the 1868 Treaty at Fort Bridger.

Merrilat searched for an answer from Yeager Timbimboo that firmly established Sagwitch as a leader of the Northwestern Shoshones to strengthen their case that the nation was guaranteed their lost annuities under the 1863 Treaty at Box Elder and party to the signing of the 1868 Treaty at Fort Bridger. Realizing he wasn't going to get far asking Yeager Timbimboo questions about leadership, Merrilat turned to asking Timbimboo about places they traveled. Yeager vividly described areas near Brigham City, Promontory Point and Malad, Idaho that served as meeting places for his father and other chiefs. However, in the last description he added: "The Indians has names for them places in the Indian language." Instead of thinking about how investigating these Indian-named places could establish Northwestern Shoshone claims, a frustrated Merrilat cut Yeager Timbimboo short: "I want to get it so the white men will know it."⁶² Merrilat's words symbolize the federal government's approach to handling indigenous claims in the early twentieth century, and Native peoples were expected to make arguments that conformed to white people's knowledge of peoples, places, and events.

The converse did not apply to the federal government. As an attorney from Washington DC, Merrilat probably knew that Yeager Timbimboo's answers would not satisfy the Court of Claims. Yeager Timbimboo is recorded numerous times saying that he and his father lived a "roaming life," following a seasonal round common to most

⁶² Yeager Timbimboo, testimony for the Plaintiff, June 29, 1931, 34.

Natives of the Great Basin.⁶³ Yeager Timbimboo's testimony revealed that bands of Northwestern Shoshones occupied and used the land laid out in their petition, but in 1929 the Court of Claims was tasked with evaluating Northwestern Shoshone claims through titles established in the 1863 Treaty of Box Elder.⁶⁴ In other words, the federal government in the 1940s had the luxury of largely ignoring testimonies made by Northwestern Shoshones. This would not be the case when the Indian Claims Commission later took up the claims in 1946, but in the 1930s and 40s the Court of Claims was solely interested in Indigenous titles to land through treaties.

While the Court of Claims was reviewing information for the case, Shoshones and Bannocks at Fort Hall joined the Northwestern Band's claim. On May 25, 1936, the allied tribes hired a new attorney from Washington D.C., Ernest L. Wilkinson, who represented them going forward. He immediately proved to be a skilled attorney, and in two he years he successfully convinced a Congressional subcommittee that the Northwestern Shoshone territory was actually larger than originally proposed in their petition.⁶⁵ Wilkinson used an official map drawn by James Duane Doty, Superintendent of Indian Affairs for Utah from 1861 to 1863. Doty had personally negotiated the 1863 Treaty of Box Elder.⁶⁶ In 1938, the Northwestern Shoshone claim was bolstered both by

⁶³ Yeager Timbimboo, testimony for the Plaintiff, June 29, 1931, Yeager's description of life for him, his father, and other Shoshones translated as "roam," "roaming," or "roamed" "six times.

⁶⁴ Reports Decided for Plaintiffs of US Court of Claims Case No M-107, The Northwestern Band or Tribe of Shoshone Indians and the Individual Members Thereof vs. United States of America, 1942, MS 176 Folder 1, Northwestern Band of Shoshone Tribal Library, 38-39. *I should find jurisdictional act of Congress of February 28, 1929 45 Stat 1407.

⁶⁵ Brigham D. Madsen, *The Northern Shoshoni*), 230.

⁶⁶ Brigham D. Madsen, *The Northern Shoshoni*, 36-37.

Shoshones from Fort Hall and also by written evidence of their territory, yet even this newfound strength wasn't enough to sway the Court of Claims.

In 1942, the court ruled against the Northwestern Shoshone claims. Judge Littleton, writing for the majority explained: "We think it cannot be said that the treaty with plaintiff bands recognized and acknowledged any right, title, or interest in them to the territory which they may have occupied or to which they now make claims."⁶⁷ The judges based their conclusions on an amendment to the Box Elder Treaty which denied Shoshones the legal title to lands.⁶⁸ Northwestern Shoshones proved where their homelands were, but the federal government essentially ignored the evidence in favor of a circumstantial reading of treaties that had little to do with the case built by Shoshones and their attorneys. The Supreme Court upheld the Court of Claims' decision in 1945 over a split decision.

Although Yeager Timbimboo and other Northwestern Shoshones' testimonies did not prove fruitful for their claim, their perspectives were valuable, nonetheless. Yeager Timbimboo still had many stories to tell. He would find his granddaughter, Mae an eager listener. Yeager's testimony was overlooked for the federal government's initial decision about Northwestern Shoshone claims, but Mae Parry later recalled that she started writing down her grandfather's "Indian stories" when she was twelve years old.⁶⁹ There is no doubt that she had newfound confidence and took a fresh interest in Northwestern Shoshone history and the Bear River Massacre when she returned to Washakie from Sherman Institute in 1931.

⁶⁷ Reports Decided for Plaintiffs of US Court of Claims Case No M-107, 1942, 47.

⁶⁸ Reports Decided for Plaintiffs of US Court of Claims Case No M-107, 1942, 46-47.

⁶⁹ Mae Timbimboo Parry, interview with Kathy Bradford, 8.

Mae Timbimboo Returns to Washakie and Finishes School

Mae Timbimboo completed her last few years of grade school at Washakie in a new building that was constructed while she was at Sherman. From 1882 to approximately 1929, a white building which Mae Parry estimated was about 24 by 40 feet, served as a meetinghouse for school, church, and social events for the community.⁷⁰ The new school was a red-brick building that stood separate from the meetinghouse. For the first time students at Washakie were being educated in a space designed for the purpose. When Mae Timbimboo came back from Sherman and started school at Washakie again, the new building was not the only change that caught her attention. Mae Parry later recalled that the first time she saw Grant Parry, who was the same age as her, he “looked disgusted” because he and his younger sister Margaret had been forced due to inclement weather to spend the school day at Washakie instead of their own (a few miles away in Portage).⁷¹ Thus, began a lifelong friendship between Mae and Grant that would not have been possible had Joseph Parry, Grant’s father, not been called by the LDS Church to replace George M. Ward as bishop for the Washakie Ward.

The Parry family had experienced a bit of cultural shock when they moved from their home in Malad, Idaho to Washakie in 1928. Joseph and Margaret Parry were tasked with the difficult task of moving four sons and one daughter, ranging in age from five to fifteen, to a place with totally different resources than they were used to.⁷² Grant Parry

⁷⁰ Mae Timbimboo Parry, interview with Kathy Bradford, 3.

⁷¹ Mae Timbimboo Parry, interview with Michele Welch, 11.

⁷² Grant Morgan Parry, “United States Census, 1930,” Portage, UT, database, *FamilySearch*, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MDCB-RGL?from=lynx1UIV7&treeref=LXDN-5BM>.

remembered that it was difficult for the family at first since there was no electricity, running water, or sewer. But the family soon adapted, and Joseph Parry joined the Northwestern Shoshones in dry farming on allotments at Washakie.⁷³ By the time Mae took notice of Grant, it didn't bother him that he was the only white child his age in the community (despite his initial "disgusted" look), and he made friends with various Northwestern Shoshone children whom Mae knew. The loose association between Mae and Grant became much stronger in 1935 when they were enrolled in the same class at Bear River High School in Garland, Utah.

Later in life Mae Timbimboo Parry looked back fondly upon her high school years. She told interviewer Michelle Welch in 2006 that she "enjoyed high school;" although she was surprisingly ambiguous about what exactly she truly loved about the experience beyond a few inspiring teachers.⁷⁴ Indeed, a 1938 letter written by Mae Timbimboo to Superintendent Donald H. Biery at Sherman Institute tells a different story. Mae Timbimboo was approaching her senior year at Bear River High School, and she was apparently disillusioned by her experience:

Dear Sir:

I would like very much to attend Sherman Institute, since it is a training schools for Indian youth, who want to learn and get ahead. For the past three years I have been attending a High School twenty-five miles away from home, and it is very difficult for me to get there every day which I did with great effort. I do not wish to find fault with the school; but to me it seems that they do not care what the Indian children get out of their schooling. So what knowledge I have gained I had to fight for. I have always been

⁷³ Grant Parry, interview by Paula Watkins, transcript, Clearfield, UT, June 2, 2006, MS 56 2003-2006 NWBSN Oral History Projects, Folder 1, Northwestern Band of Shoshone Tribal Library, 2.

⁷⁴ Mae Timbimboo Parry, interview by Michele Welch, 10.

interested in getting ahead and have planned for some time to help my Indian people.⁷⁵

Mae Timbimboo concludes the letter with a request for information. Perhaps she sent the letter too late, Superintendent Biery held it for too long, or there were clerical difficulties, but Biery did not reply until September 27.⁷⁶ Mae Timbimboo was already at least a month into her senior year by the end of September. Given Mae's concern with effectively navigating both the "Indian" and "white" worlds, it apparently made more sense to return to Sherman where she could readily access better educational resources. She was only nineteen years old and willing to forgo the comfort and family for a time if that meant she could help her people. Mae Timbimboo never returned to Sherman Institute as a student, but she carried the plan to "help [her] Indian people" with her for the rest of her life.

That is not to say Mae Timbimboo did not find success during her senior year. As a matter of fact, she was chosen to give a seminary graduation speech, and her now very close friend, Grant Parry, helped her write it.⁷⁷ After Mae finished high school, she attended LDS Business College for a year.⁷⁸ Mae Timbimboo and Grant Parry had grown close through education and learning from one another. They held onto this dedicated relationship, and the two were married in Grantsville, Utah on June 22, 1939.⁷⁹ In 2006

⁷⁵ Mae Timbimboo, letter to Donald H. Biery, three pages, August 4, 1938, Mae Timbimboo, National Archives at Riverside, Sherman Indian High School, Student Case Files, 1902-1980, Box Number 356.

⁷⁶ Donald H. Biery, letter to Mae Timbimboo, September 27, 1938, Mae Timbimboo, National Archives at Riverside, Sherman Indian High School, Student Case Files, 1902-1980, Box Number 356.

⁷⁷ Mae Timbimboo Parry, interview by Michele Welch, 10.

⁷⁸ Mae Timbimboo Parry, interview by Michele Welch, 12. LDS Business College was renamed Ensign College.

⁷⁹ Mae Timbimboo in entry for Grant Parry, "Utah Marriages, 1887-1935," database, *FamilySearch*, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:HNDS-PG2M>.

Mae Parry recalled: “A lot of times you say...the woman behind the man makes a success. I think I just did it the other way about.”⁸⁰ Mention Mae graduating from college.

From approximately the mid-1920s to the early 1940s, the Northwestern Band of Shoshones extended their influence on a national level. Northwestern Shoshone children went to boarding schools and endured the conditions to bring knowledge back for their people at Washakie. As a sovereign nation, the Northwestern Band directly confronted the federal government for the first time in decades. Although Shoshones lost the Court of Claims case, that struggle set the stage for another legal contest with the Indian Claims Commission, which they would win. Mae Timbimboo Parry, who was a child when the Court of Claims case unfolded, became a powerful activist for Northwestern Shoshone sovereignty rights during the next chapter of legal battles with the Indian Claims Commission. To do so, she relied on the stories told to her by her grandfather Yeager Timbimboo and other Northwestern Shoshone elders.

⁸⁰ Mae Timbimboo Parry, interview by Michele Welch, 12.

CHAPTER TWO

Confronting Injustice:

Recognition and Mae Timbimboo Parry's political activism

On August 26, 1967, the Northwestern Band of Shoshones held a meeting at Bannock Creek Chapel in Bannock Creek, Idaho, to discuss and ultimately vote on a settlement offered by the federal government for the unlawful seizure of their lands. In a consolidated settlement, the government was prepared to pay the Northwestern Shoshones, the Shoshone-Bannocks at Fort Hall, and the Eastern Shoshones from Wind River, a sum of \$15,700,000.⁸¹ Northwestern Shoshones were unsure at the time how much of this money they would receive or how it would be distributed to individual members, but they knew any substantial sum could alleviate the damages done to them on behalf of the United States government and its citizens. So, when a vote was held at Bannock Creek Chapel in the summer of 1967, all 68 members who were in attendance accepted the settlement. The vote was verified by Chairmen Frank L. Timbimboo and his sister, Mae Parry.⁸²

Leading up to 1967, Mae Parry and the Northwestern Band faced challenges over the few decades that threatened their very existence as a united people. World War II dispersed their communities, Congress threatened to terminate their federal tribal status,

⁸¹ United States, Indian Claims Commission, Shoshone Tribe of Indians of the Wind River Reservation, Wyoming, et. al., Petitioners, v. the United States of America, Defendant. Shoshone Nation or Tribe of Indians on the relation of and represented by Edward Queep Boyer, et al., Petitioner, v. the United States of America, Defendant, Finding of Fact, *Indian Claims Commission Index*, 1973, 3, 16-17.

⁸² Indian Claims Commission, Shoshone Nation v. United States, Finding of Fact, 17-18.

and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints sanctioned burning down their houses in Washakie. Mae Parry worked tirelessly recording evidence, keeping notes, lobbying Congress and speaking to audiences to defend her tribe, tell their story, and seek relief from those injustices.

Her political activism and secretarial work during the 1960s and 70s had sweeping consequences for her life and the future of the Northwestern Band. Parry's position allowed her to conduct two crucial and interlinked purposes at the same time; She could record Northwestern Shoshone meetings and testimonies and paired that information with the histories she learned from contemporary elders like her grandfather Yeager Timbimboo. Parry's activism in Northwestern Shoshone politics fueled her rebuilding of Northwestern Shoshone history.

After more than one hundred years since the signing of the 1863 Box Elder Treaty and a claims case that stretched out through most of the twentieth century, the federal government finally acknowledged historical transgressions against the Northwestern Band and affirmed on a national level their place among the greater Shoshone nation. However, as implied above, this wave of success in the 1970s and 80s transpired following a series of challenges unseen since the Bear River Massacre.

WWII, Termination, and the Burning of Washakie

The 1940s and the onset of WWII brought new challenges to the Northwestern Shoshone. Women and senior Shoshones took defense and industry jobs at Hill Air Force Base near Ogden, UT or the Clearfield Naval Supply Depot, and young men enlisted in

the armed forces.⁸³ These new opportunities strained the community since commuting between home and work was becoming unfeasible. Mae Parry took on numerous government and public service jobs during the interwar and postwar periods. She worked as a secretary for the IRS, a housekeeper for St. Benedict's Hospital, and later, performed more clerical work at Ogden Arsenal before finally finding her permanent job as a personnel clerk at Hill Air Force Base.⁸⁴ But her main occupation over the approximately ten-year stretch was that of mother and primary caretaker for her six children—all born between 1940 and 1950. Her eldest son Bruce was born in 1941, Myron Frank in 1941, Brian in 1945, twins Jean and Janet in 1947, and Anne in 1950.⁸⁵ It is likely that given her absence in the historical record during the 1940s and 1950s mothering took precedence over her activism in that period. Her husband, Grant Parry, worked full time at Hill Field Air Force Base before securing a job as a utility repairer at Lakewood Furniture Store in Bountiful, UT—a twenty-mile trip he commuted every day from the Parry home in Clearfield.⁸⁶

Tens of thousands of Native Americans living on and off reservations across the United States relocated away from their respective communities during WWII for wartime-industry jobs and military service, but it wasn't just the war that pushed Native Americans to migrate away from reservations in the 1940s. Historian Kenneth R. Philp argues that Native American affairs were in a "crisis" at the end of WWII "because of

⁸³ Thomas G. Alexander and Rick J. Fish, "The Defense Industry of Utah," site converted from hardcover in 1994, https://www.uen.org/utah_history_encyclopedia/d/DEFENSE_INDUSTRY_IN_UTAH.shtml.

⁸⁴ Michelle Welch "The Utah Women's Walk" (master's thesis, Utah State University, 2007), 103.

⁸⁵ Michelle Welch "The Utah Women's Walk," 103.

⁸⁶ Grant Parry, interview by Paula Watkins, transcript, Clearfield, UT, June 2, 2006, MS 56 2003-2006 NWBSN Oral History Projects, Folder 1, Northwestern Band of Shoshone Tribal Library, 62.

widely divergent definitions of Indian self-determination.”⁸⁷ During the 1930s, President Roosevelt’s administration reevaluated the issue of Native American self-determination or self-rule for the first time since Congress ended treaty making after 1871. For New Deal reformers, self-determination “meant that dependent Indian nations retained inherent power of sovereignty and the legal and the legal rights to a separate existence under permanent federal guardianship.”⁸⁸ In 1934, Congress passed the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA), and the bill promised many economic and political improvements for Native American communities on a wide range of economic and political issues including ending land allotments, Native American eligibility in positions at the Indian Bureau, and tribal governments.⁸⁹ However, the IRA immediately fell short of expectations because it failed to reconcile differences between tribes, which left many American Indians cynical about federal involvement in their affairs.⁹⁰ During the late 1940s and into the 1950s, a new regime of legislators and Indian Affairs officials emerged who sought to liberate Native Americans from federal wardship. They took advantage of this discontent and dispersal of Native peoples during the war.

In 1953, Congress passed House Concurrent Resolution 108 and Public Law 280, the Indian Termination Bill. The proposition set rules for allowing states to extend jurisdiction over tribal lands and discontinue federal services to tribal governments. White policymakers and American citizens, who overwhelmingly supported Indian

⁸⁷ Kenneth R. Philp, *Termination Revisited: American Indians on the Trail to Self-Determination, 1933-1945* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 3.

⁸⁸ Kenneth R. Philp, *Termination Revisited*, 3.

⁸⁹ Philp, *Termination Revisited*, 5.

⁹⁰ Philp, *Termination Revisited*, 11; Donald L. Fixico, *Termination and Relocation: Federal Indian Policy, 1945-1960* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986), xiii, 99.

Termination, quickly packaged the destructive proposal as a break from the precedent of treating Native Nations as sovereign entities (*Worcester v. Georgia*) within the United States' borders, but rather, the liberation of Native Americans from government power on behalf of Indigenous peoples' full assimilation into American society. Strangely enough, that flawed thinking by whites about termination actually shielded the Northwestern Band of Shoshone from Washakie.

One of termination's staunchest supporters in Congress came from Senator of Utah Arthur V. Watkins, who immediately turned his attention to his home state after securing Congress' approval of Public Law 280. According to historian Donald L. Fixico, Watkins believed treaty rights limited the federal government's power over Native Americans.⁹¹ Northwestern Shoshones from Washakie were one of several bands targeted in Utah for termination.⁹² Historian R. Warren Metcalf, historian of Native American history and law in the twentieth century, argues that Mormon leaders in Utah were "*predisposed* to be assimilationist and terminationists."⁹³ He suggests that Native American "assimilation" was a natural extension from teachings in the Book of Mormon, and so when secular assimilation by termination became an option, Mormon leaders in Utah equated contemporary politics about Indian Termination with their own religious beliefs.

⁹¹ Donald L. Fixico, *Termination and Relocation: Federal Indian Policy, 1945-1960* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986), 100.

⁹² R. Warren Metcalf, *Termination's Legacy: The Discarded Indians of Utah*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 102.

⁹³ R. Warren Metcalf, *Termination's Legacy: The Discarded Indians of Utah*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 14.

What did this mean for Northwestern Shoshones from Washakie? In the eyes of Mormon leaders, Northwestern Shoshone were *already* “assimilated.” Even so, Utah administrators could not find a reason to terminate the Northwestern Band. They did not recognize the physical existence of a Northwestern Shoshone community.⁹⁴ From their perspective, there was nothing to terminate. Northwestern Shoshones were not “Indian enough” to warrant termination, according to the standards set by men like Senator Arthur V. Watkins. Underestimating Northwestern Shoshones’ unified purpose and collective identity would cost the government \$1,375,000 when the Northwestern Band mobilized around their settlement with the Indian Claims Commission in 1967.

While the Northwestern Band dealt with the Indian Claims Commission and a brief struggle against termination, they faced a crisis that struck much closer to home and brought on a feeling of collective pain for Northwestern Shoshones from Washakie. Northwestern Shoshones steadily migrated away from Washakie during WWII for defense jobs or service in the military and into the 1950s for postwar industries, which became available to Northwestern Shoshones through skills they acquired during the war effort.⁹⁵ This move away from Washakie gave the impression to Mormon leaders that Northwestern Shoshones fully embraced assimilation and had no further use for the mostly rundown homes left at Washakie in the late 1950s.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints adopted a policy of burning seemingly abandoned buildings at Washakie in the summer of 1960 to make way for selling the property to private ranchers over the next decade.⁹⁶ Although the buildings

⁹⁴ R. Warren Metcalf, *Termination's Legacy*, 102.

⁹⁵ Scott R. Christensen, *Sagwitch: Shoshone Chieftain, Mormon Elder, 1822-1887*, 204.

⁹⁶ Mae Timbimboo Parry, “The Northwestern Shoshone,” 58.

looked vacant, Mae Parry contends, “some Shoshone families had possessions in the homes such as appliances, bedding, and personal papers that were burned.”⁹⁷ The LDS Church owned Washakie and had the legal right to clear properties, but that went against a decades-long and negotiated promise made between church officials and Northwestern Shoshones, who were led to believe that they would hold Washakie in “perpetuity” as their home.⁹⁸

In 1973, Northwestern Shoshones organized around the burning of Washakie in a similar fashion to how they mobilized around the land claims suit against the federal government. They called for reparations for the trauma and property lost. Members of the Northwestern Band from Washakie earned valuable experience with diplomacy in recent years, and they put these refined skills to use when dealing with the LDS Church.

Director of Indian Affairs for the State of Utah and eldest son of Mae Parry, Bruce Parry set up a meeting between Chairmen Frank Timbimboo, Councilman Leland Pubigee, and church officials at the church headquarters in Salt Lake City.⁹⁹ Mae Parry recorded the meeting minutes. She was a well-seasoned activist by this time. Six years earlier, she had accompanied Frank L. Timbimboo to Washington D.C. for hearings with the Commission. Aside from her writings, Parry proved herself a dependable recordkeeper and activist for the Northwestern Band over two major clashes with outside forces as well. Northwestern Shoshones bolstered their call for reparations over the burning of

⁹⁷ Mae Timbimboo Parry, “The Northwestern Shoshone,” 58.

⁹⁸ Mae Timbimboo Parry, “The Northwestern Shoshone,” 58.

⁹⁹ Darren Parry, *The Bear River Massacre: A Shoshone History*, 135; Bruce Parry, interview by Paula Watkins and Scott Christensen, transcript, Church History Department, The Church of Latter-Day Saints, Salt Lake City, UT, August 29, 2013, MS 167, Folder 19, Northwestern Band of Shoshone Tribal Library, 46.

Washakie by collecting testimonies from members regarding the significance of Washakie in 1974. Mae T. Parry included transcripts of these testimonies in her comprehensive history of her people, “Northwestern Shoshone.”¹⁰⁰

Mae T. Parry tracked the importance of Washakie for the Northwestern Band by collecting testimonies from Northwestern Shoshone who lived there, including her father Moroni Timbimboo. Those testimonies were used to bolster arguments made by Chairmen Frank L. Timbimboo and other members that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints owed the Northwestern Band compensation for the burning and selling of Washakie. As a result of Shoshone efforts, the Church admitted to wrongdoing with the burning of Washakie and gave the Northwestern Shoshones 184 acres on the western side of Washakie in 1984.¹⁰¹

These testimonies served three purposes. First, they demonstrated that Washakie was a place of vital importance to Northwestern Shoshone culture. Next, the testimonies offered practical reasons for why Northwestern Shoshones still used Washakie, despite the church’s assessment that it was abandoned. Finally, they chronicled the trauma Northwestern Shoshone felt as they learned about or even watched the burning of homes where many of their parents, grandparents, and kin once lived. Her interview with Moroni Timbimboo drives that point home. He told Mae how difficult it was to find a new home outside Washakie after the fires:

“Since the church is burning everything around us, maybe we better move somewhere else,” I said to my wife. Just as I said this, Mr. Nish from Plymouth Utah, came to our Washakie home and said he heard we were looking for a place to live. He invited us to visit him at Plymouth. The

¹⁰⁰ Mae Timbimboo Parry, “The Northwestern Shoshone,” 58-67.

¹⁰¹ Mae Timbimboo Parry, “The Northwestern Shoshone,” 67; Brian Nicholson, “Shoshone timeline,” *Deseret News*, September 14, 2007.

next day we drove to Plymouth to look around. We saw three houses. I had only a nickel in my pocket and was house hunting. I believe the Lord guided us to Plymouth and to our present home. Mr. Keith Lamb, a good friend and neighbor, must have known I was short of money. He offered to pay for our home and all he said after he had paid for our home was 'pay me back when your harvest is over.' We did not ask him for a loan, he just offered his help. When my harvest was done, I paid Mr. Lamb back.¹⁰²

Not all Northwestern Shoshones from Washakie were as fortunate as the Timbimboos. Moroni Timbimboo's position as bishop granted him and his family certain privileges that most Shoshones could not access. There is no doubt the Timbimboos held a position in the community that favored their interactions with white Mormons more so than many other Northwestern Shoshone. Moroni and Amy Timbimboo's home at Washakie stood untouched by the flames probably because it was one of the most recognizable homes to LDS members, since Moroni Timbimboo served as a bishop for seven years.¹⁰³ Yet, it is telling that possibly the most reputable Northwestern Shoshone from the LDS Church's perspective had only a nickel in his pocket. Although they were arguably affected less directly than others, Moroni and Amy Timbimboo still felt the pain of having to abandon their original home.

Marjorie Alex Pacheco witnessed the burning. She was one of the few Northwestern Shoshones who still permanently lived at Washakie in 1960. She recounted the brutal scene to Mae.

I was one of the witnesses to the burning of Jessie Perdash's shed and trailer house and her cellar. I also saw the log house burn that Wallace Zundel bought from Jessie Perdash. It was in the fall and our men had gone deer hunting. My daughter-in-law Marilyn Alex and I were inside our house. We were living in one of the cinder-block houses in Washakie.

¹⁰² Moroni Timbimboo, Testimony of Indians related to the burning of houses at Washakie, June 1974, in Darren Parry's *The Bear River Massacre: A Shoshone History*, (Salt Lake City: Common Consent Press, 2019), 124.

¹⁰³ Mae Timbimboo Parry, interview by Kathy Bradford, 7.

I heard a roaring and rumbling sound outside, so we went outside to see what was going on. We saw Wallace's house on fire. The flames were shooting really high. Because the home was old and of dry logs it burned hard and fast. I decided not tell Moroni and May Timbimboo. Wallace is their son-in-law. I was afraid they might run over there and try to put the fire out and, in the process, might get hurt or even burn up... The next day, I told Moroni and Amy [Timbimboo]. They knew nothing about this burning up. There was no way we could have saved this place.¹⁰⁴

Pacheco's first-hand accounts dismantled the notion that her people entirely abandoned Washakie. She stressed Washakie's cultural importance and practical uses of Washakie, and the shock experienced by Northwestern Shoshone as a result of the fires. She remembered that Northwestern Shoshones still used the area around Washakie for hunting. The community still provided subsistence. The homestead stood as a place still tied to Northwestern Shoshone identity. Pacheco's last statement is perhaps the most telling; She described the shock and despair experienced by Northwestern Shoshone as a result of the fires. There was no recourse for the burning of Washakie that individual Northwestern Shoshones alone could salvage.

With testimonies like Marjorie Alex Pacheco's, the Northwestern Band and Mae Parry built an effective case that designated Washakie as a place fundamental to Northwestern Shoshone lifestyles and traditions. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints compensated the Northwestern Band with 184 acres where they still hunt, hold gatherings, and bury members.¹⁰⁵ In fall 2020, Northwestern Shoshones and volunteers planted trees throughout the cemetery as part of a revitalization project in the area.

¹⁰⁴ Marjorie Alex Pacheco, Testimony of Indians related to the burning of houses at Washakie, June 1974, in Darren Parry's *The Bear River Massacre: A Shoshone History*, (Salt Lake City: Common Consent Press, 2019), 133-134.

¹⁰⁵ Mae Timbimboo Parry, "The Northwestern Shoshone," 67.

Gaining Recognition as the Northwestern Band of the Shoshone Nation

After Northwestern Shoshones voted to accept offer of \$15,700,000 for all Shoshone Nations on August 26, 1967, Mae Parry and Frank L. Timibimboo traveled to Washington, D.C. during the final hearing between the United States and the Shoshone Nation, which took place on November 9, 1967.¹⁰⁶ Forty years after Mae T. Parry's first journey away from home to Sherman Institute in Riverside, California, where she sharpened skills crucial for her future roles as secretary and recordkeeper for the Northwestern Band, she would embark on another great journey towards the East Coast of the United States to finish the work previous Shoshone activists started in 1929 when they presented their first set of claims to the Court of Claims. The Indian Claims Commission, also known as the Commission, was established in 1946 to extend and settle claims cases left over from the Court of Claims' deliberations during the 1930s and 1940s.¹⁰⁷

The federal government prepared to enter final assessments and judgments for hundreds of Native American groups by the early 1970s. Historian Peter Iverson suggests that Native Americans saw the Commission as a "means to confront long-standing grievances and to force the federal government to acknowledge that millions of acres of Native land had been taken illegally or improperly."¹⁰⁸ The financial reimbursements were important for ensuring basic needs, but a recognition of historical trespasses by the

¹⁰⁶ Indian Claims Commission, *Shoshone Nation v. United States*, Finding of Fact, 24-25.

¹⁰⁷ US Congress. Indian Claims Commission Act. August 13, 1946. *Public Law* 79-726. H.R. 4497, 1049-1050.

¹⁰⁸ Peter Iverson, "*We Are Still Here: American Indians in the Twentieth Century*," (Wheeling: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1998), 115.

United States and its citizens stood as the most crucial aspect of the Claims Commission for Native Americans.

But the Commission should not be viewed as a government “fix” for Native American grievances. Among others, historian Philip Burnham notes several limitations of the Commission that prevented land reclamation on part of Native claims. Most prominently, the Commission could not—by specific mandate at its inception in 1946—return Native lands.¹⁰⁹ Additionally, Burnham stresses the Commission as a last major attempt by the government to take Indigenous lands without Native peoples’ consent. By limiting Indian titles to treaty land (again), the “extra” land not acknowledged through treaties would fall under the management of the Department of Interior and redistributed through the National Park Service.¹¹⁰ It is no coincidence that Resolution 108 (Termination Bill) materialized only seven years after the establishment of the Commission. Both measures were perceived as tools to undermine tribal sovereignty.¹¹¹

As we have seen with Mae Timbimboo’s boarding school experience and the previous claims case, Native peoples “turned the power” and used expectations against whites to gain more control over their lives, land, and history. The Indian Claims Commission was no exception. Despite its numerous shortcomings, the Commission stood as the most legitimate government directive for Native American reparations in the twentieth century, and hundreds of Native Nations understood it with equal importance. Native Americans could not reclaim their aboriginal holdings through the Commission,

¹⁰⁹ Philip Burnham, *Indian Country, God’s Country: Native Americans and the National Parks*, (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2000), 131.

¹¹⁰ Philip Burnham, *Indian Country, God’s Country*, 132.

¹¹¹ Donald L. Fixico, *Termination and Relocation: Federal Indian Policy, 1945-1960*, 14.

but they could use the federal compensations for future investments such as private land purchases and establishing tribal governments to legitimize their rapport with the federal government—a position vastly misjudged by Washington, D.C.

Future investments were of primary concerns for Northwestern Band Chairmen Frank L. Timbimboo and Mae Parry when they attended the joint hearing between the United States and the Shoshone Nation on November 9, 1967. They voiced apprehensions about how the reimbursements would be distributed to individual Shoshone Nations. This allocation stood as a unique problem for Northwestern Shoshones because they did not have an official governing body at the time.¹¹² The Northwestern Band finally decided to distribute the award of \$1,375,000 to individual members, and in August of 1972, 221 members received their money via either direct checks or through BIA Individual Indian Money accounts.¹¹³

Even more significant was the federal government's implicit recognition that the Northwestern Band was a distinguishable group among the Shoshone tribes. Between 1868 until the Commission's final decision on February 13, 1968, Northwestern Shoshones were not recognized by law as a party to the treaty at Fort Bridger, and so their status in the Shoshone nation at the federal level remained an open-ended question for one hundred years. Their victory in 1968 meant more than the sum of \$1,375,000; it was a means through which Northwestern Shoshones reclaimed their identity within the Shoshone Nation.

¹¹² Indian Claims Commission, *Shoshone Nation v. United States*, Finding of Fact, 24.

¹¹³ Mae Timbimboo Parry, "The Northwestern Shoshone," 67.

The government's assumed recognition did not escape the Northwestern Shoshones. Instead of remaining complicit with their series of victories against the federal government and the state of Utah, Northwestern Shoshones—like many Native communities—were emboldened to act on a grander scale for their sovereignty in the 1980s.¹¹⁴ In 1987, the Northwestern Band established a Tribal Council and wrote a constitution “to gain greater recognition from the United States government.”¹¹⁵ The Tribal Council consisted of seven members who were elected to four-year terms, and the council elected a chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary and treasurer to two year terms.¹¹⁶ Mae Parry served as the first secretary.¹¹⁷ She performed secretarial work for the Northwestern Band for over twenty-five years. She served as secretary for the Northwestern Band before the position became official in 1987, stretching back to her role in the Shoshone claims case and the burning of Washakie in the 1960s. On April 29, 1987 the Northwestern Band was finally recognized by the federal government as a separate band among the Shoshone Nation and given its official title: The Northwestern Band of the Shoshone Nation.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Frederick Hoxie, *This Indian Country: American Indian Activists and the Place They Made*, 4-5; Daniel M. Cobb and Loretta Fowler, eds. (*Beyond Red Power: American Indian Politics and Activism since 1900*, (Santa Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research Press, 2007), 45.

¹¹⁵ Mae Timbimboo Parry, “The Northwestern Shoshone,” 72.

¹¹⁶ Constitution of the Northwestern Band of the Shoshone Nation, rev. November 7, 2006, Northwestern Band of the Shoshone Nation, Ogden, UT, 3.

¹¹⁷ This comes from circumstantial information: Mae Parry signed a certification as secretary for the Northwestern Band for House Joint Memorial No. 4, State of Idaho House of Representatives, on March 18, 1989.

¹¹⁸ “NW Band of Shoshone,” Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board (NPAIHB), 2021, <https://www.npaihb.org/member-tribes/nw-band-of-shoshone/#>; note: I still use terms Northwestern Band and Northwestern Shoshone going forward for uniformity.

For Mae T. Parry and the Northwestern Band, the successful closing of the claims case and gaining federal recognition stood as signals of Shoshone resolve and the continuation of their culture. She was ten years old when the Northwestern Band first brought its aboriginal land claims to the United States government, and she witnessed the deaths of many elders—including her grandfather Yeager Timbimboo—who worked towards Northwestern Shoshone sovereignty but did not live long enough to see their efforts to fruition. Mae Parry's successful involvement with the second phase of the claims case brought together contemporary Northwestern Shoshones with voices from the past. She took the same steps while working tirelessly on other issues that faced her people's community as well.

From the 1940s until end of the 1980s, the Northwestern Band escaped termination and mobilized around three major obstacles: the burning of Washakie, the lands claims case with the Commission, and gaining federal recognition. Mae T. Parry's recordkeeping and activism were central for the successful clearing of those barriers. By the end of 1987, the Northwestern Band owned 184 acres at Washakie, received \$1,375,000 from the federal government, and was federally recognized as a distinct group within the Shoshone Nation for the first time since the 1863 Treaty of Box Elder. A true testament to their shared resolve, Northwestern Shoshones gained more power and autonomy as a Native American group in the last quarter of the twentieth century than they did at the end of the nineteenth century. During that time Mae T. Parry would effectively start building Northwestern Shoshone history as it is known today.

CHAPTER THREE

Archiving Injustice:

Placemaking and Mae Timbimboo Parry's cultural activism

“Our dreams have become reality today.” - Gwen Davis, former Chairwoman of the Northwestern Band of the Shoshone Nation.¹¹⁹

Mae T. Parry spent a lifetime advocating for the Northwestern Band's sovereignty rights and reclaiming the Bear River Massacre narrative; her efforts were rewarded with the ultimate victory in 2003. With the help of friends and family, eighty-four-year-old Mae Parry walked on the Bear River Massacre site knowing for the first time that her people owned the sacred land. Twenty-six acres were purchased for the Northwestern Band through the Trust for Public Land, which raised \$55,000 from local donors and foundations.¹²⁰ During her final years, Mae Parry could reflect on her life with the conviction that she changed history for the better of her people.

By the mid 1970s, Parry was a distinguished member of the Northwestern Band of the Shoshone Nation by virtue of her political activism. In 1967, she traveled to Washington, D.C. with her brother, Frank Timbimboo, and they testified before the Indians Claims Commission on behalf of the Northwestern Shoshone claims originally petitioned for in 1929. As a result of their testimony and years of lobbying by Northwestern Shoshone leaders and elders, the Northwestern Band was awarded

¹¹⁹ Kristen Moulton, “Shoshones Finally Get Massacre Land,” *The Salt Lake Tribune*, March 25, 2003.

¹²⁰ Kristen Moulton, “Shoshones Finally Get Massacre Land.”

\$1,375,000 for the unlawful seizure of their lands nearly one hundred years ago.¹²¹ Mae Parry effectively saw to the end a struggle that her people had been dealing with for the better part of the twentieth century. It was her job to take notes, and to collect evidence for the tribe's various struggles for its land and history. She reconstructed Northwestern Shoshone history from her meeting notes, stories, and testimonies she gathered while she served as the Northwestern Band's secretary. From the late 1970s until the early 2000s, her attention turned mostly towards cultural activism: collaborating with scholars, continuing the arts and crafts done by her mother, writing Northwestern Shoshone history, and reclaiming the Bear River Massacre.

Mae Parry used knowledge gathered from both contemporary and past members of the Northwestern Band to publicly challenge the Bear River "Battle" narrative in print for the first time in 1976. The Bear River Massacre, the most tragic event in Northwestern Shoshone history where more than 400 Shoshones were killed by U.S. Army volunteers, had been falsely retold as a "battle" by whites since the day of the massacre on 29 January 1863.¹²² But that started to change when Mae T. Parry told her peoples' version of the story. There is no doubt that Mae Parry's cultural activism made her the most recognizable member among the Northwestern Shoshones, and so, she truly stood as Matriarch of the Northwestern Band of the Shoshone Nation between the publishing of "Massacre at Bia Ogoi" until the time of her passing in 2007.

Mae T. Parry Builds Northwestern Shoshone History

¹²¹ Mae Timbimboo Parry, "The Northwestern Shoshone," In *A History of Utah's American Indians*, ed. by Forrest Cuch, 25-72 (University Press of Colorado, 2003), 71.

¹²² Darren Parry, *The Bear River Massacre: A Shoshone History*, 37.

Of the two generations raised at Washakie from approximately 1880 to 1930, Mae Timbimboo Parry was perhaps the person who knew most about life there. Born in 1919, she represented the second generation of Northwestern Shoshones born at Washakie. On December 5, 1985, Kathy Bradford—a research specialist for the Brigham City Museum of Art and History—found herself talking to a living person who experienced life at Washakie and was a direct descendant of Chief Sagwitch. So, Bradford evidently went to the right person when she visited Mae Timbimboo Parry’s home to conduct an interview concerning what Parry remembered about Washakie. Little did Bradford know that Mae Parry didn’t have to “remember” everything about Washakie because she had written it all down. Throughout the course of the interview, Bradford would learn not only about Washakie but the power of Mae Timbimboo Parry’s knowledge as well.

Though it is difficult to know to what extent from the transcript, Parry was clearly prepared for her interview with Kathy Bradford. She laid out for Bradford the first families who moved to Washakie, the allotments issued to Northwestern Shoshones under three Congressional acts, and Northwestern Shoshone farming practices. Kathy Bradford asked Parry to tell her what she remembered about Washakie and that was her answer, which constitutes nearly two pages on the transcript.¹²³ Drawing from the detailed records she collected throughout her life, Mae Parry recounted a deep understanding of Northwestern Shoshone history.

As a matter of fact, those past experiences came directly from her grandfather, Yeager Timbimboo. Mae Parry credited Yeager Timbimboo for her awareness of Northwestern Shoshone history and the Bear River Massacre: “Most of the things that I

¹²³ Mae Timbimboo Parry, interview by Kathy Bradford, 1-2.

have were told to us by our grandfather. He was a person that believed you had to know about your history—about your people...When I was about twelve years old, I started to write these things down so some of the things I have are very old and taken as my grandfather told it.”¹²⁴

A year later in 1986, she was chosen as Utah’s Honorary Mother of the Year. American Mothers, Inc. lists several eligibility requirements for nominating a potential Mother of the Year on the association’s website. Although written in 2021, these standards shed light on why Mae Parry was an excellent candidate for the award. A candidate must show high regard for and strengthen her family, community, and self.¹²⁵ Mae Parry spent a lifetime recording the history of her family and the Northwestern Band; she had five children within a period of fifteen years. After successfully raising those children to adulthood, she fiercely advocated for Northwestern Shoshone sovereignty in the 1960s and 1970s and took it upon herself to write her own account of the Bear River Massacre.

It was likely this state-wide recognition combined with her previous collaborative work that drew historian Scott Christensen’s attention. In 1988, Christensen was researching for a potential book about Chief Sagwitch’s life. He sent a letter to Parry on February 20 with a few pages of questions in preparation for an interview on March 9.¹²⁶ While her knowledge of Sagwitch’s life was impressive, possibly an overlooked aspect of the interview related to Mae Parry’s life and her significance to Northwestern Shoshone

¹²⁴ Mae Timbimboo Parry, interview by Kathy Bradford, 7-8.

¹²⁵ “Nominate: Mother of the Year eligibility requirements,” 2021 American Mothers Inc., <https://www.americanmothers.org/nominate/>.

¹²⁶ Mae Timbimboo Parry, interview by Scott Christensen, transcript, Clearfield, UT, March 9, 1988. MS 103. Northwestern Band of Shoshone Tribal Library, 1.

history and culture. Parry in a rare moment reflected on her own influence among Northwestern Shoshones: “Well like I say, I have been so interested in them [her people] you know, I know the people. I know who their grandparents were, and who their great-grandparents were. I’ve just kept with them, I’ve never lost our Indian people, which is good I guess.”¹²⁷

Scott Christensen went on to write most definitive work about Sagwitch. Christensen’s *Sagwitch: Shoshone Chieftan, Mormon Elder, 1822-1887*, tells the story of Sagwitch’s conversion to Mormonism after the Bear River Massacre and his leadership during the Northwestern Band’s move to Washakie in 1881. Although mainly focusing on Sagwitch’s life, Christensen adds an important perspective to Northwestern Shoshone history by showing how they survived and carried on their ways of life after the massacre.

During the same year as her interview with Christensen, Parry participated in a lesser known but equally important interview. Carol A. Edison did not know Mae T. Parry had won Honorary Utah Mother of the Year, but she was drawn to Parry’s home in Clearfield on January 25th for the same reasons that contributed to Mae winning the award two years before. Carol Edison worked for the Folk Arts Program of the Utah Arts Council, which started holding folk arts from across Utah in 1986 at the Chase Home Museum of Utah Folk Arts in Salt Lake City.¹²⁸ She visited Parry’s home to talk “mostly

¹²⁷ Mae Timbimboo Parry, interview by Scott R. Christensen, 23.

¹²⁸ Carol A. Edison, “C. Utah Folk Arts Collection and Chase Home Museum and Archive,” in *Folklore in Utah: A History and Guide to Resources*, David Stanley, ed. (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2004), 271.

about crafts traditions she continues.”¹²⁹ Mae Parry’s story transcended her writings and collaboration with scholars on Northwestern Shoshone history. She was also a fundamental knowledge keeper for the Shoshone traditional arts and crafts.

Carol Edison asked Mae Parry if the pieces of clothing her mother made were for her family or for profit, and Parry replied, “Both, both. I remember as a little girl she would cut out work gloves because you know we were living in an area with a lot of farmers and ranchers.”¹³⁰ Parry’s mother, Amy Timbimboo and other Northwestern Shoshone women navigated the capitalist marketplace at Washakie by producing goods for their families and selling those products to locals at the same time. Historian Colleen O’Neill argues, “American Indians created resourceful ways to make a living without abandoning their cultural values and traditions.”¹³¹ Shoshone women’s production of arts and crafts at Washakie during the 1920s and 30s had a lasting effect on their culture as well.

Prior to the interview, Wallace Zundel, Mae Parry’s brother-in-law told Edison that Parry’s specialty was bags. So, Edison asked Parry, “What kind of bags?” Parry then took Edison through the process while she described an actual bag she was working on at the time: “There is a deer skin in the middle, but it was brown, and I was going to...a lot

¹²⁹Mae Timbimboo Parry, interview by Carol A. Edison interview, Utah Folk Arts Program, January 25, 1988, not yet filed, Northwestern Band Shoshone Tribal Library, 1; audio was held in Darren Parry’s personal collection until transcribed by author in spring 2021 and added to tribal library.

¹³⁰ Mae Timbimboo Parry, interview by Carol A. Edison, 1.

¹³¹ Colleen O’Neill, *Working the Navajo Way: Labor and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 3.

of times the brown shows through so I was going to line it with pellon so it would be white and not show the brown.”¹³²

“So, you don’t generally put pellon in between; it’s just for this one that you needed it?” Edison enquired.

“Yes,” Parry answered.

“Do you often beadwork on fabric first?” Edison asked.

“Sometimes. A lot of time we draw it one, right on the buckskin.” Parry said.

“When you do it this way, when you put the beadwork on the fabric first, it’s basically completed when you put it down? You tack down the fabric?”

“No, we work right on the buckskin. All the way through. It is there as a pattern.”

“Oh, wow beautiful.” Edison added, “are any of these designs and forms the kinds of things you would have seen in Washakie?”

“Oh yes” Mae added.¹³³

This is quite possibly the only recorded conversation of Mae T. Parry showing someone outside of the Northwestern Band how this process took shape. In her interview with Christensen, Parry admitted, “I almost don’t have a story myself” because she gave away so many stories and rarely had time to talk about her own life.¹³⁴ But in the last twenty-five years of her life Mae Parry spent more time connecting with her family and Northwestern Shoshone traditions.

¹³² Mae Timbimboo Parry, interview by Carol A. Edison, 15. Note: pellon is a polyester material. I give Edison’s and Parry’s dialogue separate paragraphs in this section to preserve the conversation.

¹³³ Mae Timbimboo Parry, interview by Carol A. Edison, 16.

¹³⁴ Mae Timbimboo Parry, interview by Scott R. Christensen, 22.

Mae Parry's sister, Hazel Zundel, was an accomplished artist as well, and according to Parry, Hazel's work was so good in the 1980s that it was in high demand just like their mother's was when the Timbimboo sisters were young.¹³⁵ Mae Parry noticeably took up arts and crafts with Hazel and her husband, Wallace, after she retired from Hill Air Force Base. She reflected on this time of her life fondly: "And we just started going to all the arts and crafts show, powwows, all over the country. We did our own things. We made all kinds of things: gloves, bags, purses, and moccasins, necklaces, earrings, anything that people would ask for."¹³⁶

Amy Timbimboo, Hazel Zundel, and Mae T. Parry all have art on display at Chase Home Museum in the Utah State Folks Art Collection. In 2003, Amy Timbimboo contributed three pieces posthumously including baby moccasins, high-topped women's moccasins, and a pouch.¹³⁷ Hazel shared the credit with her husband Wallace for a pair of women's moccasins added to the collection in 1983.¹³⁸ Parry's pictorial beaded bag was added to the collection in 1988, and it depicts a buffalo in a garden.¹³⁹

While the preservation of these pieces is crucial for the continuation of Northwestern Shoshone culture, housing the items at Chase Home Museum is controversial, nonetheless. Historian Kathy M'Closkey argues that the loss of native

¹³⁵ Mae Timbimboo Parry, interview by Carol A. Edison, 2.

¹³⁶ Mae Timbimboo Parry, interview by Carol A. Edison, 6.

¹³⁷ Amy Timbimboo, "Shoshone Baby Moccasins with Blue Beads," 2003; "Shoshone High-Topped Women's Moccasins," 2003; "Shoshone Pouch with Pansies," 2003, Utah State Folk Arts Collection, State of Utah Art Collections.

¹³⁸ Wallace Zundel, Hazel Zundel credited in description, "Shoshone Women's Moccasins," Utah State Folk Arts Collection, State of Utah Art Collections, 1983.

¹³⁹ Mae Timbimboo Parry, "Shoshone Pictorial Beaded Bag," Utah State Folk Arts Collection, State of Utah Art Collections. 1988.

lands is associated with the appropriation of their material culture.¹⁴⁰ M'Closkey's point is—despite great gains in sovereignty rights over the last thirty years—still true for Northwestern Shoshones. The Northwestern Band owns parcels of land at the Bear River Massacre Site and Washakie, but it does not have a designated place to house arts and crafts, yet. Perhaps Northwestern Shoshone products will be returned to the Northwestern Band when the planned Interpretive Center at the Bear River Massacre Site is completed in the coming years.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, Mae Parry was not done telling Northwestern Shoshone history. In 2000, Parry published her most substantive work on Northwestern Shoshone history at eighty-one years old. Her chapter, “The Northwestern Shoshone” appeared in Forrest Cuch's *A History of Utah's American Indians*, and is still to this day the most accurate record of Northwestern Band history from before the Bear River Massacre through the twentieth century. Further, Mae Parry's account is the *only* comprehensive history as of February 2021. While this is a crucial indicator of Mae Parry's significance to Northwestern Shoshone history and identity, it is also a reminder that there is much more work to be done for Northwestern Shoshone history.

Mae Timbimboo Parry Reclaims the Bear River Massacre

On March 31, 1976, Mae Parry sent a letter that contained her account of the Bear River Massacre to Newell Hart, a white amateur historian from Preston, Idaho. Even though he did not hold an official history degree from a university, he had dedicated

¹⁴⁰ Kathy M'Closkey. *Swept Under the Rug: A Hidden History of Navajo Weaving* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002), 1.

much of his life to recording history of the Cache Valley and the Bear River Massacre.¹⁴¹ He referred to the so-called “Battle at Bear River” as a massacre apparently before any professional historian.¹⁴²

In 1975 Hart encouraged Parry to set the record straight. He entreated, “the time has surely come when it is right for your story to see the light of day, at long last.”¹⁴³ A year later, Mae T. Parry responded to Hart’s request with a written account of the Bear River Massacre she created in consultation with “living relatives of the survivors.”¹⁴⁴ But telling her people’s story of the Bear River Massacre came at a great emotional price. She concluded the 1976 letter, which contained her people’s story of the Bear River massacre, with the following line: “It was very difficult to write because of the feelings and memories it stirred up within me.”¹⁴⁵

The difficulty Mae T. Parry experienced over writing about the Bear River Massacre reflected how Northwestern Shoshones felt and remembered the event since January 29, 1863; it was a devastating slaughter of their ancestors. The massacre version of the story, however, was not accepted among the general public for many years. To justify a version of history that excluded Northwestern Shoshone perspectives, Daughters of Utah Pioneers (DUP), the Cache County Boy Scouts, and the Utah Pioneer Trails and

¹⁴¹ Biographical Note, Newell Hart papers, 1860-1893, 35 boxes, UUS_CAINE COLL MSS 3, Utah State University, Merrill-Cazier Library, Special Collections & Archives.

¹⁴² Brigham Madsen’s *The Shoshoni Frontier and the Bear River Massacre*, is earliest known monograph by historian with a degree to accurately portray Bear River Massacre, as cited by the National Park Service.

¹⁴³ Newell Hart, letter to Mae Parry, May 15, 1975, box 29, folder 3, Newell Hart papers, 1860-1893, 35 boxes, UUS_CAINE COLL MSS 3, Utah State University, Merrill-Cazier Library, Special Collections & Archives.

¹⁴⁴ Mae Parry, letter to Newell Hart, Newell Hart papers, 1860-1893, box 29, folder 3, March 31, 1976.

¹⁴⁵ Mae Parry, letter to Newell Hart, March 31, 1976.

Landmarks Association—all groups that had no affiliations with Northwestern

Shoshones—erected a monument in 1932 that commemorated the “battle” at Bear River.

The monument bears this subsequent description:

The Battle of Bear River was fought in this vicinity January 29, 1863. Col. P. E. Connor, leading 300 California volunteers from Camp Douglas, Utah, against Bannock and Shoshone Indians guilty of hostile attacks on emigrants and settlers, engaged about 500 Indians of whom 250 to 300 were killed or incapacitated, including about 90 combatant women and children. 14 soldiers were killed, 4 officers, and 49 men wounded, of whom 1 officer and 7 men died later. 79 were severely frozen. Chiefs Bear Hunter, Sagwitch and Lehi were reported killed. 75 horses and much stolen property were recovered. 70 lodges were burned.¹⁴⁶

Just about every line totally erases Northwestern Shoshone peoples from the narrative and contains little resemblance to the reality of what actually happened.

However, the monument reflected an opinion held by a majority of white Utahns, and Idahoans. Perhaps the most striking and equally horrendous feature of the 1932 monument is the phrase “combatant women and children.” The marker did not necessarily downplay the violence carried out against Northwestern Shoshones, but instead reinforced a narrative that justified the violence by discrediting Shoshone innocence, including women and children.

In 2008, John Barnes wrote the most definitive memory study to this day on the history of commemorations at the Bear River Massacre Site. He traces local histories written around the same time as the unveiling of the 1932 monument. For example, Merrill D. Beal’s *A History of Southeastern Idaho*, propagated and “reflected popular

¹⁴⁶ John Barnes, “The Struggle to Control the Past: Commemoration, Memory, and the Bear River Massacre of 1863,” 85; author personally read monument at Bear River Massacre Site.

sentiment” that Northwestern Shoshones provoked the settlers and fought fiercely against Col. Connor and the California Volunteers.¹⁴⁷

Darren Parry, Mae’s grandson, believes his grandmother attended the monument’s unveiling in 1932 when she was thirteen years old. That event, according to Darren Parry, galvanized his grandmother to record and tell her people’s story.¹⁴⁸ Mae Timbimboo returned from Sherman Institute in 1931 and already started recording stories told to her by her grandfather Yeager Timbimboo and his cousin, Ray Diamond. Yeager Timbimboo attended the monument’s unveiling.¹⁴⁹ Mae Timbimboo certainly knew of the monument in 1932 and had a lifetime to think about its inaccuracies.

As if that marker created by whites wasn’t enough to fortify Mae T. Parry’s resolve to tell her people’s story of the Bear River “Battle,” *another* monument was placed on the site by the DUP in July of 1953, which mostly honored the local Mormon women who cared for wounded soldiers:

Attacks by the Indians on the peaceful inhabitants in this vicinity led to the final battle here January 29, 1863. The conflict occurred in deep snow and bitter cold. Scores of wounded and frozen soldiers were taken from the battlefield to the Latter Days Saint community of Franklin. Here pioneer women, trained through trials and necessity of frontier living, accepted their responsibility of caring for the wounded until they could be removed to Camp Douglas, Utah. Two Indian women and three children, found alive after this encounter, were given homes in Franklin.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ John Barnes, “The Struggle to Control the Past: Commemoration, Memory, and the Bear River Massacre of 1863,” 86.

¹⁴⁸ Darren Parry, presentation at session one in Land Acknowledgment Workshop, Logan: Utah State University, February 3, 2021.

¹⁴⁹ Scott R. Christensen, *Sagwitch: Shoshone Chieftain, Mormon Elder, 1822-1887*, 201.

¹⁵⁰ John Barnes, “The Struggle to Control the Past: Commemoration, Memory, and the Bear River Massacre of 1863,” 91; author personally read monument.

Two features of the 1953 commemoration distinguish it from the 1932 monument. The text completely erased the violence and celebrated local involvement. Together, these descriptions reduced Northwestern Shoshones to people of the past and building a sense of community for local whites in opposition to the Northwestern Band. White people immediately celebrated Connor and the California Volunteers' actions in 1863, but the 1953 DUP plaque demonstrates the concreted efforts Utahns and Idahoans expended over decades to transform the Bear River "Battle" into an event that celebrated Mormon "pioneers." As a matter of fact, in Wellsville—just forty miles south of the massacre site—white Cache Valley Residents in 2017 still celebrated the "pioneering" aspect of the Battle of Bear River in their annual Founders' Day festival on Labor Day weekend. The main event included a "sham battle," where some whites "played Indian" while others dressed up as the California Volunteers. Like a wild west show, Northwestern Shoshones were seemingly wiped out to give way to Mormon settlers. City leaders finally shut down this disturbing practice after Native activists, including Shoshone tribal leaders vehemently protested.¹⁵¹

Years of resentment towards the monuments must have led to Mae Parry's decision to directly contest both monuments in her 1976 essay, "Massacre at Bia Ogoi," published in the *Trailblazer* during the summer of 1976. At the end of Parry's essay, she proposes an alternative commemoration:

The Massacre of Bear River was fought in this vicinity January 29, 1863. Colonel P.E. Connor and his California volunteers from Camp Douglas Utah, all but annihilated the Northwestern Shoshone Tribe. Chief Sagwitch Timbimboo escaped the massacre. Chief Bear Hunter was

¹⁵¹ Robert Gehrke, "It's 2017, but people in Utah still put on 'redface' for an inaccurate re-creation of an American Indian vs. Mormon battle," *Salt Lake Tribune*, September 6, 2017.

tortured to death. No Bannocks were present, only Northwestern Shoshones of the Great Shoshone Nation.¹⁵²

Mae T. Parry's boldness, resolve, and her dedication to Northwestern Band identity and history is on full display in her 1976 rendition of the Bear River Massacre monument. Mae Parry's alternative commemoration begins with the very same line as the 1932 monument but substitutes "Battle" for "Massacre," directly countering the false narrative on the original plaque. The story of the Massacre at Bia Ogoi is a Northwestern Shoshone story. It is a tragic event in Northwestern Shoshone history that wholly affected the Northwestern Band and forever shaped Northwestern Shoshone identities. This was the ultimate point of Mae T. Parry's rendition of the massacre and her alternative commemoration. "No Bannocks were present" is especially telling for that point, since Mae Parry knew from elders' stories that there were only Northwestern Shoshones present. The Bear River Massacre belonged to the Northwestern Shoshone and taking back the story from whites gave Northwestern Shoshones power over themselves.

In his seminal book, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache*, Keith H. Basso asserts that "knowledge of places is closely linked to knowledge of the self, to grasping one's position in the larger scheme of things, including one's own community."¹⁵³ By using "Bia Ogoi," Northwestern Shoshone for Big River, Mae T. Parry combines knowledge of herself as a Shoshone individual and a sense of Shoshone community. Further, she draws almost entirely on her people's knowledge to

¹⁵² Mae Timbimboo Parry, "Massacre at Boa Ogoi," in Newell Hart's *The Bear River Massacre: Being a complete Source Book and Story Book of the Genocidal Action Against the Shoshones in 1863 and Gen, P.E. Connor and how he relocated to and dealt with Indians and Mormons on the Western Frontier* (Preston, ID: Cache Valley Newsletter Publishing Company, 1980), 152.

¹⁵³ Keith H. Basso, *Wisdom Sits In Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache*, (Albuquerque: University of Mexico Press, 1996), 34.

write the story. Parry individually names thirteen survivors of the massacre who passed down their stories to Shoshone descendants. Among those thirteen was Parry's grandfather, Yeager Timbimboo, who played a major role in Mae Parry's understanding of Northwestern Shoshone history long after his death in 1937.¹⁵⁴ This results in evidence that can be clearly traced back over one hundred years and counters Americans' misconceptions that oral histories are necessarily less factual than written sources: "Indians have a way of putting things down. Just their language paints more of a picture, and that that they say would paint you a picture."¹⁵⁵

Mae T. Parry used her people's spoken records to inform a written account that was the most accurate telling of the Bear River Massacre since January of 1863. She falls in line with other great Native American writers and activists of the 1960s and 70s such as Vine Deloria Jr., who redefined the conversation about Native Americans in the twentieth century. Deloria argues: "The primary goal and need of Indians today is not for someone to feel sorry for us... We need the public at large to drop myths in which it has clothed us for so long... We need fewer and fewer 'experts' on Indians."¹⁵⁶ Mae Parry detached myths about Northwestern Shoshones and contested the "experts" who falsely told her people's history for decades and reclaimed the Bear River Massacre as a Northwestern Shoshone story.

Mae Timbimboo Parry's "Massacre at Bia Ogoi" set off a wave of scholarship about the Northwestern Shoshone and reframing the Bear River "Battle" as a massacre.

¹⁵⁴ Yeager Timbimboo, "Find A Grave Index," database, *FamilySearch*, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QVP9-43XL>.

¹⁵⁵ Mae Timbimboo Parry, interview by Kathy Bradford, 8.

¹⁵⁶ Vine Deloria, Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969), 27.

Many of those authors who wrote about the massacre from the mid 1980s through the early 2000s worked directly with Mae Parry or relied heavily on her sources and writing for their own conclusions. Newell Hart published his own history of the Bear River Massacre in 1980 based on Mae Parry's writings and advice through their personal correspondences. It was the first of several collaborations between Mae Parry and historians—an association that took up a large space in the last twenty-five years of Mae Parry's life.

Her 1976 article stimulated great interest from the public as well. Her work was beginning to attract regional press. Encouraged with increasing interest from the media on April 21, 1977, Mae Parry wrote: "The Deseret News is going to come interview me soon about the battle and may also include pictures."¹⁵⁷ Her story clearly had an effect on the general public as well. This would be first of many conversations Mae Parry held with journalists and community leaders. Mae T. Parry formed a bridge between her people's understanding of history and themselves and how they were perceived by whites to garner attention for Northwestern Shoshone identity.

When speaking about Mae Parry's impact as a knowledge keeper of both Northwestern Shoshone culture and history, grandson Darren often repeats the well-known line, "when an old Indian dies, a library burns." There is no doubt that Mae Parry embodied a nexus to Shoshone culture seemingly impossible to recreate without her presence. She talked directly with survivors of the Bear River Massacre, learned beadwork from her mother and grandmother, and worked tirelessly on behalf of

¹⁵⁷ Mae Parry, letter to Newell Hart, Newell Hart papers, 1860-1893, box 29, folder 8, April 21, 1977.

Northwestern Shoshone sovereignty for most of the twentieth century. And so, part of Shoshone lifeways, however large or small that might be, died with Mae Parry. Her descendants and the Northwestern Band took steps to preserve her work, though, for the benefit of Northwestern Shoshone history and culture; the Northwestern Shoshone Tribal Library and Archives Collection—created in the early 2000s—holds countless items written and collected by Mae Parry over her lifetime. Her legacy lives on through the collection and continued efforts by her kin to strengthen Northwestern Shoshone sovereignty. For now, it is with deep respect for her life that I end this chapter with her own words:

“At that time, everything was The Battle of Bear River. I told them it’s not the Battle of Bear River, it’s a massacre. And later on, the historians caught on, and they started to have me come and talk to them. I’ve spoken before more important people than I can recall. Some came from University of Utah and all the universities in Idaho and some eastern colleges even got hold of the story, and so, if I’ve done anything, I’ve fulfilled that mission. I guess that was my assignment is to—I just always felt like I had to say something—that I was going to change that *battle* to *massacre*.”¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸ Mae Timbimboo Parry, interview by Michele Welch, transcript. Clearfield, UT, May 26, 2006. MS 182 Folder 1. Northwestern Band of Shoshone Tribal Library, 17.

CONCLUSION

Mae Parry embodied two spirits of Native American activism that are rarely found in a single person.¹⁵⁹ She worked as secretary for the Northwestern Band for most of her adult life, recording meeting minutes, testimonies, and acting as a representative in Washington, D.C. In this role, Parry was a political activist, with sovereignty and restitution acting as primary considerations for her efforts. But Mae Parry worked on her own accord to reclaim the Bear River Massacre narrative, produce Shoshone arts and crafts, and reconstruct Northwestern Shoshone history, which established her as a key knowledge keeper for Northwestern Shoshones and outsiders who wanted to learn more about her people.

Mae Parry's activism shaped Northwestern Shoshone politics, economic, and culture during the twentieth century. Historian R. David Edmunds' study on Native American leaders in the 1900s focuses mostly on political and activists who formed tribal governments, negotiated with businesses, or administered economic programs within tribes, but his larger discussion regarding different spheres of Native American leadership clarifies Mae Parry's varied efforts within the Northwestern Band. Edmunds argues, "there are many within the local communities who have spent their lives as religious leaders, counselors, or resource people whose knowledge of tribal traditions is treasured by all who know them."¹⁶⁰ In Mae Parry's case, her work as secretary enabled her to

¹⁵⁹ R. David Edmunds, ed., *The New Warriors: Native American Leaders since 1900*, 6-8.

¹⁶⁰ R. David Edmunds, ed., *The New Warriors: Native American Leaders since 1900* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press), 7-8.

accrue experience with contemporary Northwestern Shoshone politics and gather knowledge of tribal traditions at the same time, and she merged those experiences with her own family's history—passed down to her by her grandfather Yeager Timbimboo. Mae Parry the Matriarch of the Northwestern Shoshone emerged in the last quarter of the twentieth century from her work with Shoshone politics and culture. She earned the title Matriarch over a lifetime of overcoming significant trials to help her people.

Mae T. Parry's Legacy

Mae Parry's influence didn't end with her passing away on March 20, 2007, after a years-long struggle with Parkinson's disease. Her son, Bruce became the Chief Executive Officer of the Northwestern Shoshone Economic Development Corporations in 2003. Bruce later went on to chair the Tribal Council. Darren, Bruce's son, took up his grandmother's cause with a new vigor. As chairman of the council, Darren Parry personally negotiated the purchase of five hundred and fifty acres of the Bear River Massacre Site in January 2018 and later wrote, "I felt her presence [Mae]."¹⁶¹ Patty Timbimboo Madsen, Mae Parry's niece on her brother Frank Timbimboo's side, served as Natural Resources and Manager of Cultural Resources for over two decades and established the Northwestern Band of Shoshone Tribal Library and Archive (NWBSTLA) in the early 2000s, which still serves members today.

Mae Parry's work lives on through her descendants and the Northwestern Band of Shoshone Tribal Library and Archive, where most of her research, interviews, and photo collections are stored today. In the early 2000s, Patty Timbimboo Madsen was tasked

¹⁶¹ Darren Parry, *The Bear River Massacre: A Shoshone History*, 4.

with creating a library for the Northwestern Band by Shoshone leaders. Patty said they gave her complete discretion and “allowed me to dream,” so she used mostly personal donations within the tribe to build the library as a center for Northwestern Shoshone cultural knowledge.¹⁶²

For Patty, this meant not only holding records, but a place where Northwestern Shoshones of all ages could gather and learn more about their culture as well. Patty set up programs at the library where Shoshone children would sing together in Shoshone and could access computers at any time.¹⁶³ Historian R. David Edmunds argues that “channeling new technology and the changes it will bring for the general benefit of their people may emerge as one of the greatest challenges for Native Americans.”¹⁶⁴ At the turn of the twenty-first century, young Native Americans had educational opportunities and resources far beyond previous generations, but the technologies often existed outside of tribal places, potentially undermining their cultural identity. Patty took on this challenge with great strides at the Northwestern Band of Shoshone Tribal Library (NWBSTL) by making it a place where Shoshones had access to essential resources and studied their culture. Beyond educational opportunities, tribal members can go to the tribal headquarters for health services and housing.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Patty Timbimboo Madsen, interview by Diane Kerby and directed by Michele Welch, transcript, Northwestern Band of the Shoshone Nation Native American Tribal Office, Brigham City, UT, October 30, 2013, *Utah Women's Walk Oral Histories*, George Sutherland Archives & Special Collections Oral History Program, Utah Valley University, 5.

¹⁶³ Patty Timbimboo Madsen, interview by Diane Kerby and directed by Michele Welch, 5.

¹⁶⁴ R. David Edmunds, ed., *The New Warriors: Native American Leaders since 1900* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press), 7.

¹⁶⁵ Patty Timbimboo Madsen, interview by Diane Kirby and directed by Michele Welch, 6.

In 2013, Michelle Welch, who interviewed Mae Parry in 2006, asked Patty what she remembered about her Aunt Mae. Patty described Mae Parry's time on the tribal council, her battle with Parkinson's, and how Parry passed on her research to Patty: "she [Mae] told me, 'Patty I want you to have these things because I know you'll take care of them.'"¹⁶⁶ Patty honored her aunt's legacy with remarkable success; Mae Parry's stories and research are accessible today through the archives mostly due to Patty's efforts, along with Paula. In the same interview, Patty reflected on Mae Parry's legacy: "what she had given them [Shoshones] was to me their history."¹⁶⁷

During her long and incredibly active life, Mae Parry fought tirelessly for Northwestern Band sovereignty rights and recognition. Her notes on Shoshone botany have helped the restoration of the Bear River Massacre site and contemporary understandings of Shoshone food.¹⁶⁸ She played a significant role in changing the public's narrative about the Bear River Massacre and shaping the current knowledge about Northwestern Shoshone history through her activism. Her life shows how Shoshone people's decisions and actions influenced the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, the state of Utah, and the federal government in ways previously deemed impossible by the public and scholars alike. She traveled to Washington D.C. as a representative of the Northwestern Band. According to Mae Parry, Northwestern Shoshones were not desperate victims of violence but rather Native Americans who adapted from a great tragedy and survived on their own terms.

¹⁶⁶ Patty Timbimboo Madsen, interview by Diane Kirby and directed by Michele Welch, 24.

¹⁶⁷ Patty Timbimboo Madsen, interview by Diane Kirby and directed by Michele Welch, 24.

¹⁶⁸ Darren Parry, *The Bear River Massacre: A Shoshone History*, 106-118. Future studies of Parry's research should include more about the importance of her work with botany.

At the end of “Northwestern Shoshone,” Mae Parry lists several Northwestern Shoshone leaders including Thomas Pabawena, Enos Pubigee, and George P. Sam, who worked with the federal government towards restitution but died before the Northwestern Band won its claim in 1968.¹⁶⁹ Historians should honor more Northwestern Shoshone leaders with their own stories because they set the path for future activists. Mae Parry carried on the legacies of both her ancestors and earlier Northwestern Shoshone leaders with her storytelling and activism on behalf of the Northwestern Band. Her grandfather Yeager Timbimboo passed down Shoshone traditions and his story of the Bear River Massacre to her, and she safeguarded his memory so later Northwestern Shoshone understood their history and identity. Mae Parry’s descendants and the Northwestern Band are safeguarding her memory too, ensuring that her legacy is always remembered.

¹⁶⁹ Mae Timbimboo Parry, “The Northwestern Shoshone,” 71.

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